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IN A NEW WAY

SERMON - ESSAYS ON WELL-WORN SUBJECTS

BY

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TO MY SISTER.

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PREFACE.

I have read and I have heard that the selection of an appropriate title for a work has always been a matter of serious deliberation for an author. This for the reason that many persons judge of a book by the cover, and so they are, oftentimes, predisposed in favor of, or prejudiced against a work, by a glance at the title of the book, irrespective of the contents.

Among the critical appreciations that came to me in my first venture on the sea of Literature—*Old Thoughts On Old Themes*—was one from a venerable and saintly Bishop. “You have treated” he wrote me, “old subjects in a new way.” “Non novum, sed nove.” This has been the idea uppermost in the author’s mind, both in the treatment of the subjects that make up this modest volume, and in the selection of a title for the same. The Horatian advice to poets and to writers generally—“nonumque prematur in annum”—“and let it be held back till the ninth year”—has not been overlooked. Mindful of the dictum of the poet, the author has given his manuscripts careful and

attentive study and, after due consideration and following friendly counsel, now sends them out in their present form.

These Sermon-Essays have been delivered neither in Cathedrals old and grey, nor in Universities new and grand. They are not the weighty utterances and well-rounded periods of some far-famed divine, nor the masterly efforts and captivating climaxes of some popular present day orator. They are merely the studied and gathered thoughts of an unpretentious country rector who has been left to live and to labor amongst a virtuous and God-fearing people; and who, in the dull hours of a lonely parish, has learned to find comfort in his home and companionship in his books.

EDWARD CHARLES HEARN.

July 1, 1911.

Gratitude.

In all things give thanks; for this is the will of
God in Christ Jesus concerning you all.

I Thessalonians—5-18.

GRATITUDE.

THERE is hardly anything so trying to the feelings of poor human nature, nothing, in fact, that we find more difficult to overlook and to forget, than the ingratitude which we experience from our fellowmen. If you have ever in your lives invoked a blessing that was repaid with a curse, bestowed a kindness that was received with coldness, or did a favor that met with forgetfulness and contempt, if there are at present among your kinsfolk, acquaintances or friends, those who are seemingly indifferent to your goodness or charity, or unmindful of your favors and benefits, you can best judge of, and understand, the despicable evil of ingratitude.

Now, what is true of our own hearts and lives, is regretfully true, also, of the world at large with regard to Almighty God. We read in the seventeenth chapter of the Gospel of Saint Luke that, on one occasion, as our Blessed Savior drew nigh to a certain town of Samaria, there met Him ten lepers who, standing at a distance and raising their voices in supplication, begged Him to have

I Thessalonians—I-18.

mercy on them. Jesus pitying their condition, bade them go and show themselves to the priests. The lepers went in obedience to His command; and, on their way, were suddenly made clean. Struck at the miracle which had been so graciously wrought in their favor, one of their number began with a loud voice, to proclaim the praises of the Almighty, ran back to his Divine Benefactor, and, casting himself at His feet, returned thanks for the blessing he had received. Jesus asked him if there were not ten who had been cured, and what had become of the other nine? For of them all, says Saint Luke, this was the only one who returned to give Glory to God—and he was a Samaritan.

The reproach which our Blessed Lord cast upon the nine ungrateful lepers in not returning to thank Him for the mercy He had shown them, proves how very displeasing to Him is the sin of ingratitude. Ingratitude, says Saint Bernard, dries up the fountains of piety, stops the flow of Divine grace and hinders the hand of God from showering down the favors He has in store for His deserving friends.

Cicero calls gratitude the mother of virtues; he reckons it the gravest of all duties; and uses the words “grateful” and “good” as synonymous terms, inseparably united in the same character. In truth, gratitude is one of the most beautiful

virtues in human nature; yet it is as rare as it is beautiful. There are many people who feel happy over their good fortune and many who are even proud of it, and these feelings are, sometimes, confounded with thankfulness; but there is, in reality, no resemblance. A man may be happy to the point of ecstasy and proud almost to lunacy regarding his person, his possessions, his talents and his achievements, without the slightest reference to any other being but himself and with no idea of his obligation to any other person, either divine or human. On all sides we hear complaints of "man's ingratitude to man" and even parents know "how sharper than a serpent's tooth it is to have a thankless child." Indeed, it is not an uncommon thing for kindness to even cause hatred or jealousy. The feeling of obligation, especially when it is too great to be discharged, is so irksome to certain persons that they at times hate their benefactors and avoid the very sight of them. Now, if sincere thankfulness in human relations is rare, thankfulness toward the Creator is even rarer. Yet no favor from above, say the Holy Fathers, ought to be received without the deepest sense of gratitude; for thankfulness for one blessing is the surest way to receive others. Gratitude, in fact, is a part of our christian duty; it is a pleasing virtue and the characteristic of a good heart. It is far from enough,

to observe a silent respect for our benefactors, or to content ourselves with the inward satisfaction we feel on the occasion of some extraordinary favor they have done us. The nine ungrateful lepers were undoubtedly sensible of the notice which Jesus Christ had taken of them. They admired His goodness and rejoiced at their cure. But they returned no public thanks; neither did they manifest any exterior sign of a grateful heart; and for their conduct their memory is branded with infamy, and they will stand out pre-eminent for all time as unwilling witnesses to the contemptible sin of ingratitude.

And would, that these nine ingrates of the Gospel found none, or but few, followers. But alas! we have only to look about us to be convinced how seldom thought of or how strangely forgotten is the Creator in His own world and that too by the creatures of His own hand. This is a deplorable fact, and one which is always a discovery and seems always new to us though we see more of it every day we live. Now, what better return can be given to a friend or benefactor, or how can we more heartily manifest our gratitude for favors received and our disposition to continue in the good graces of the donor than by our loyalty and fidelity in his service? And who has been a greater and more disinterested friend, a more constant and unselfish benefactor than God has been to us?

All that we are, all that we have, and all that we can ever hope to be is the pure gift of His bounty and goodness. Count up all that God has done for us and then ask why He claims our gratitude. He has thought of us and loved us from all eternity. He brought us forth from nothing and gave us being and life. When, through the transgression of our first parents we forfeited our right to our celestial inheritance, He mercifully promised His only begotten Son to pay the ransom; nay, notwithstanding our repeated transgressions and rebellions against Him He unceasingly showers down upon us His most abundant graces and blessings, and has even preserved us from falling into the abyss of eternal misery, when our crimes had provoked Him to punish us. Then there is the guardianship of bright and holy angels to which He has graciously entrusted us, our election in Christ by which we enjoy faith and the sacraments, our continual preservation in the midst of so many dangers incident to our condition and all the special helps, wisely adapted graces, and the fresh arrangements of divine tenderness which He gives us daily.

If we had only the will to be grateful, would not every manifestation of human love, all the experiences of life, be they sweet or bitter, call forth our thanks, aid us to forgive all things, and bid us join with our fellowmen in hymns of

thanksgiving! And yet, what does the Almighty meet with from the majority of men in return for all that He has done for us, save coldness, indifference, and contempt? How many seldom, or never reflecting on the source whence all blessings flow, go down to their graves with their hearts and lips sealed to that significant christian sentence. "Thanks be to God." Some, after devoting to this miserable and perishable world the hard service of a lifetime; after having squandered their days in pursuit of its tinsel riches and evanescent pleasures, endeavor to make good their losses by spending in the service of their Maker the last days of their existence.

But suppose we look a little closer into this and examine our own lives, first, as to the amount of gratitude to God which they exhibit, and secondly, as to the manner in which we show it. There are twenty-four hours in the day, seven days in the week, fifty-two weeks in the year. We have various occupations and different ways of spending our time, and, even the most careless, must have some confused or general notion of the way in which his time is spent. Now we know that the service of God is the grand thing, or rather that it is the only thing about us that is great at all, and that in no better way can we manifest our gratitude than by employing our energies and our lives in His service. What amount of time is spent

upon it? How many hours of the day are spent in prayer, in the reading of pious books, in hearing mass, in visiting the Blessed Sacrament, or in other direct spiritual exercises? Of the time necessarily expended upon our worldly associations, or the claims of society, how much is spent with any recollection of God, or with any actual intention to do our common actions for His glory? Can we give a satisfactory answer to these questions? If not, must we not, to say the least, acknowledge that we are lacking in the gratitude we owe our Maker?

Furthermore, our actions are many and varied. If we reckon both the inward and the outward ones they are almost as numerous as the beatings of our pulse. How many of them are for God? How many in the hundred? If we study the carefulness, forethought, energy and perseverance which characterizes our spiritual exercises, will the answer be altogether what we desire? We live encircled by God's grace which flows around us like the air; our minds are illuminated by the splendors of heavenly truths; our lives are charmed by great sacraments, and we are each of us the center of a very world of invisible grandeurs and spiritual miracles. And yet, in spite of all this, I will not say it is sad, but that it is really surprising, that our gratitude to God should amount to so little as it does, whether we regard

it as to the time spent in actually thanking Him for His benefits, or as to the sincerity of our thanksgiving.*

With a view, then, to arouse ourselves to a quickened sense of that gratitude which we owe to the Giver of every good and perfect gift, let us consider, even ever so briefly, a few of those blessings for which we owe a more special and a deeper sense of thanksgiving.

And first in order comes Creation. Have you ever paused to reflect on what an immense boon the Omnipotent has conferred upon us in creating us? Whatever the future life may disclose to us, it is certain, that, in our present state, we shall never be able to appreciate, nor even to realize its priceless worth for the reason that we can form no idea of what non-existence is. So great a boon, indeed, is creation that theologians are of opinion that the hereafter of unbaptized children, though deprived eternally, as they certainly will be, of the blessed vision of God's countenance, is for them a positive good compared with non-existence. Nay, philosophers reasoning from the standpoint that it is better "to be than not to be" do not hesitate to assert that even the woful lot of the reprobate is preferable to annihilation. Milton puts into the mouth of one of the arch-fiends of hell, these strong, strange words:

*Father Faber,

“Who would lose,
Though full of pain, this intellectual being,
Those thoughts that wander through eternity,
To perish rather, swallowed up and lost
In the wide womb of uncreated night,
Devoid of sense and motion.”

If, then, existence in the aforesaid instances is a boon, what must it not be in our present condition, what will it not be if we ultimately attain the great end for which we were created? Going back some thousands of years we find nothing of all that now exists in the visible and invisible creation, but God alone. Less than a hundred years ago, and not one of us here present had any existence at all. If you searched the tops of the highest mountains, or scoured the depths of the deepest sea, you could not find us. We were nothing and nowhere. The Almighty in His infinite goodness and mercy drew us forth from that abyss of nothingness, and gave us being and life. He has, moreover, not only brought us into existence, but He has endowed us with a mind to know Him and a heart to love Him. Are not these incomparable blessings? Why did He create us in lieu of the myriads of possible beings that He has left in the dark bosom of uncreated night? Why were we born in a civilized land and under the ensign of a free, enlightened and happy people rather than in some less happy country? Would not life be precious in any shape or form? Would it not

have been a valuable favor if God had made us birds of the air, fishes of the sea, or beasts of the field? For even these fulfill the end of their existence, cling with tenacity to life and recoil with horror from death. But God has made us neither bird, nor beast; He has formed us to His own image and likeness. He has created us human beings—the noblest of all creatures. “What is man,” cries out the royal psalmist, “that Thou art mindful of him, or the Son of man that Thou dost visit him? Thou hast made him a little less than the angels, Thou hast crowned him with glory and honor, Thou hast set him over the works of Thy hands.”

See how everything in nature pays us tribute. When we sit down to our meals how many lands and how many creatures minister to our wants and comforts! The far away countries of China and Japan provide us with tea. Arabia and Java with coffee, while regions nearer home send us sugar and luscious fruits. One animal furnishes us with meat, another with milk and butter, while the sea gives up its fish to contribute to the luxury of our board. One field supplies our bread, another vegetables. Even the bowels of the earth are invaded to procure fuel for our fires, silver for our tables, iron and other metals for our domestic utensils. One animal affords covering for our hands, another for our feet and still another

for our head. The sheep is shorn of its downy fleece, the mink and seal of their fur to provide us with clothing for our body. And yet how many rise, come to and go from their meals, retire to rest and repeat the same, day after day, with never a thought of thanksgiving to Him to Whom they are indebted for every breath they draw and every comfort they enjoy.*

Moreover, creation also implies preservation; for not only are we indebted to God for the life He has given us but likewise for the continuance of the same. Hence, not only are we constrained to cry out with the Royal prophet: "Thy hands, O God, have made me and formed me," but with the same inspired writer must we add: "If Thou turn away Thy face Thy people shall be troubled: Thou shalt take away their breath and they shall fail and shall return to their dust."

One other signal and incomparable blessing of Almighty God for which we can never sufficiently thank Him is that of our vocation to His one only true and saving Church. Why is it that we were not born amid the darkness of idolatry and error, that our lines have fallen in pleasant places and not among the countless untutored tribes of heathendom that know not their Maker? Why, in fine, do we here enjoy the blessings of Catholic christianity, while so many others, living in the

*Cardinal Gibbons.—Our Christian Heritage.

very shadow of Jesus in the Tabernacle, and who, perhaps, would bear the title with greater glory to God and more honor to themselves and His holy church than we, are left groping in the darkness of error and infidelity—"tossed about by every wind of doctrine." In truth, are we not "a chosen generation", chosen from millions of others that know not God nor His holy church. Surely, "He hath not done in like manner to every nation and His judgments He hath not made manifest to them." And yet the carelessness, indifference, and little appreciation which so many nominal Catholics, manifest for their faith, cannot but be for every true and sincere member of the church a matter of profound pity and deep regret.

In sweet and consoling contrast to this lukewarmness on the part of many, and utter loss of faith in an occasional unfortunate, stands out the fervor and devotion of many who, though born and bred in the darkness of error and heresy, have been led through the workings of divine grace to the blessed light of the only true and saving faith. For it is a fact, to which all who have any acquaintance thereof must testify, that converts from the sects, especially those of learning and social standing, make, with a now and then exception, very excellent and devoted Catholics. For us who have never been strangers to the truth, to whom our faith is as dear as the apple of our eye

Shakespeare's familiar saying might find a possible application: "The good we seldom miss, we rarely prize." He who has never enjoyed the rich blessing of sight, to whom life has been a blank from the cradle, can scarce express his transcendent joy on being admitted to the full and glorious vision of day. While ever grateful for the blessings of the religion we profess and prayerfully solicitous for those on whom the beauteous light of faith is yet but dimly shining, we should not be altogether unmindful of those who are still groping in the darkness of error and infidelity, and should pray that they, too, may be led to see the truth as we see it, and seeing it, may embrace it. The words of a distinguished American convert voices, I feel, the sentiment of all who like him, have come into the ranks of catholic christianity, and I know you will allow me to repeat them:

"When I remember," he says, "the many doubts and misgivings which I felt before my conversion, and the fears with which I shrank from joining myself to a system which I had long believed to be corrupt and horrible, and when I compare these feelings with the certainty and peace and blessedness which I have found since I had the grace to make the venture, it seems to me as if the change which I have made can be compared only to the happy death of the just, from which in years gone by they, perhaps, shrank with dread

and hardly dared to look forward; but to which they forever look back as to their new birth into a state blessed beyond all that the heart of man can conceive." "As for myself," he concludes, "I need ask nothing else, nor is there anything others need ask for me beyond the grace of perseverance, that having been sought out by the grace of my Lord and Savior, and brought into the church of His mercy, contrary to my own defects, I may endure unto the end, and through the blood of my Lord and Savior, may lay hold of eternal life."

"Many and great, O, Lord," exclaims the gentle St. Francis de Sales, "are the blessings Thou hast heaped upon me and I thank Thee for them all; but how shall I ever be able to thank Thee sufficiently for enlightening me with Thy holy faith, the beauty of which appears to me to be so enchanting that I am dying for love of it, and I imagine I ought to enshrine this precious gift in a heart all perfumed with devotion."

St. Teresa, too, never ceased to thank God for having made her a daughter of His holy church; and I earnestly hope and trust that we, also, when our career is run and the dim shadows of the grave are gathering round us, may be able to say with the same great saint: "Thank God, I die a child of the church at last."

The Rt. Rev. Edward P. Wadhams, first Bishop of the See of Ogdensburg, New York, seemed to have an especial liking for the ejaculatory prayer, "Deo Gratias." He so familiarized himself with it during life, that it seemed to come spontaneously to his lips after the discharge of almost every action and episcopal function. The Rev. Clarence Walworth in his "Reminiscences of the First Bishop of Ogdensburg" mentions that, "when this truly Apostolic man was on his death-bed, he caused the profession of faith according to the formula of Pope Pius IV to be read to him in Latin. When the last words were said a bright smile overcame the bishop's face, as he piously said, "Deo Gratias."

Father Didacus, the celebrated Jesuit Missionary, who for his burning zeal in behalf of that country has been justly styled the Apostle of Peru, said four hundred times and often six hundred times a day, "My God I thank Thee."

St. Felix of Cantalico who, from the spirit of incessant gratitude that characterized his lowly life, was lovingly called Brother "Deo Gratias", when worn out with long years of service, turned to the brethren that surrounded his dying bed, and begged them to say with him and for him, for the last time on earth, "Deo Gratias." And so with the old familiar words on his lips he passed into the Blessed Beyond.

St. Lawrence gave thanks to God from the grid-iron on which he was roasted for his faith. And St. Cyprian, on hearing the sentence of death, cried aloud, "Deo Gratias"—Thanks be to God.

Apart from these incalculable gifts which we have been considering, and which we all enjoy in common, each, upon self-examination must find that he himself is the recipient of some special blessing from the hand of his heavenly Father. One will recognize it in the peace, plenty and happiness of a cozy fireside, another, in the continual enjoyment of good health; and a third, even in the midst of the very crosses and privations that an all-wise Providence sees fit to send him. Bear always in mind the golden advice of the great Apostle of the Gentiles: "In all things give thanks", and never consent to rank yourselves in the category of those who are ever and always repining at their condition; who spend their mornings in anticipating their afternoons, and their afternoons in regretting their mornings; and who seldom or never, grateful for what they have, are continually longing for what they have not. Learn, too, from the prophet David, to give thanks in every thing. Every furrow in the Book of Psalms is sown with seeds of thanksgiving. Gratitude is the tune of the Angels. A necessary, a glorious, an obvious, and withal so easy a virtue, that there is none who can not say, with the Bard of Avon:

“Beggar that I am, I am even poor in thanks, but I thank you.”

Let your appreciation of God's benefits manifest itself in your loyalty and fidelity in His service, and never go forth from your homes in the morning without first prostrating yourselves before Him to thank Him for His gracious protection during the night, and at night in turn offer Him your grateful acknowledgments for the grace and the benefits of the day.

Finally, let that beautiful and significant christian sentence, “Thanks be to God” which was always in the hearts and often on the lips of the saints, be dear to you also. Saint Augustine says there is no prayer more pleasing than “Thanks be to God.” If there is, it is surely that other which so well expresses the warm gratitude of the Celtic heart and which they tell us sounds so sweetly in the fading language of old Erin: “Millions of praises unto God.”

**Evil Communications Corrupt
Good Morals.**

“Be not deceived, evil communications corrupt good morals.”—I Corinthians XV-33.

EVIL COMMUNICATIONS.

An artist once painted a picture of a child whom he had seen at prayer. He called the picture "Innocence" and hung it on the wall of his studio where, for many a year, it was admired by all who saw it. When he was an old man he resolved, before laying aside the easel and the brush, to paint a companion picture and call it "Guilt." He visited a prison and asked to see the most hardened criminal there. A degraded wretch was shown him; and, while he was sketching the picture, he talked with the man, and found, to his horror, that he was the same he had painted as a child. Evil company had brought him to this end.

Every human being is an artist; but oh, what poor, wretched work, some do turn out. Every one of us has a picture to paint. The world is our studio; time is the canvas; the materials are our own flesh and blood and bones; and the colors we use all through the years, are generally those that we handle in the beginning. We sleep it is true, but the brush and the hand that wields it never rest; and the picture we are painting when the sun

goes down to-night, we will work at again when it comes up to-morrow. A lifetime is given us for the accomplishment of our task; the materials we carry with us to use them as we will, till the dawn of that eventful day when our picture, full drawn and finished, the Master Artist under Whose eye we have been painting, and of Whose presence we have not always been mindful, shall lift the veil, and, disclosing to us the lights and shades of the picture, shall pronounce judgment upon the merits or demerits of our work. Do you think the story of the picture that the artist painted is an overdrawn or fictitious one? No, it is not. It is a picture that is being reproduced and set in actual, living framework, every day that passes. I have heard it said that it is characteristic of every mother to consider her own baby the sweetest and loveliest baby in the whole world; and, I think you can pay a man no higher compliment, than to tell him that, as a baby, or as a child, he was very pretty. If you have ever watched, and certainly you must have at some time, the varied antics, expressions and effusive emotions of the mother, you will find that there is something in what I say. It is well for us that we are born babies in intellect. Could we understand half what mothers say and do to their infants, we should be filled with a conceit of our own importance that would render us insupportable through life. See that mother

as she dandles and fondles and hoists baby in the air, and presses it to her bosom, and smothers it with kisses, all the while meeting its smiles or its tears with the fondest assurance that it is the sweetest, the loveliest, the best little baby that ever was. How ready she is to catch its breathing soft and low; to hear its slightest movement or its faintest cough! How many sleepless nights and weary days pass over her head as she watches the young limbs develop, and how happy is she when she sees baby wax strong and grow daily in health. And then school days come on, all so soon, and the little ones come home

“Trooping, crowding, big and small,
On the threshold, in the hall—
Joining in the constant cry,
Ever as the days go by,
‘Where’s mother?’
Yes, where’s mother?—

Burdened with a lonely task,
Some day child or man may ask
For the comfort of her face,
For the rest of her embrace.
Children, love her while you may,
Some day you may vainly say,
Where’s mother?”

And school days pass away and the trying times of youth and prime follow and baby passes into the statutory years of manhood or womanhood, and goes forth into the great world where:

"The man may wander so far away,
'Twere better the boy had died;
The girl, on sin's voluptuous surges tossed,
May perish in Passion's tide;"

At any rate quite certain it is that, it will always be a pleasure for mother to remember, boy or girl, as a once innocent, sweet-faced child. Man, as we know, was created and placed in this world to labor for a higher and better state of existence. Very early in life his faculties begin to unfold; and then it is that those mighty energies which are to bear him forward to unending ages, begin to discover themselves. To enable him the better to fulfill his duties here, and to stand on high vantage ground when he leaves this cradle of his being for an eternal existence beyond the grave, should be the end of every organization and the aim and purpose of all companionship. We know, moreover, that man was not created to live alone; he is essentially a social being; and, in the midst of the loudest vauntings of philosophy, nature has her yearnings for society and friendship. The heart of every good man wants something to be kind to, and the best part of his blood, and the purest of his spirits, suffer most under destitution. Not only is man a social being, but he is an imitative one as well. We learn by imitation, far more than by precept; and, what we do learn thus, we acquire, not only more effectually, but more pleasantly. Man, in fact, is something of a chame-

leon taking his hue, the hue of his moral nature, from those around him. The old Latin adage "*Verba docent, exempla trahunt*"—Words teach, but examples draw, is as true now as ever. Not the cry, but the flight of a wild bird says a Chinese author, leads the flock to follow. We some times hear the father who remains away from mass on Sundays say, in justification of his conduct, "I do not go to mass myself, but I always send my children." Yes, but do you not know, foolish father, that the children are apt to do precisely the same as soon as they cut loose from the parental apron strings? There is a popular story told of an artist whose whole life was influenced by a little print of a Raphael Madonna that hung on the wall of the old home nursery. Is it not thus with most of us? Looking back to that sweet time can we not recall perhaps, some simple influence that swayed our whole lives, for weal or woe, for good or ill. Does it ever occur to you that very probably you are exerting an unconscious influence upon those around you? Let me illustrate: You know that the portion of this great country, originally styled "*New England*", was in early days, remarkable for bigotry and prejudice. In an obscure country town of this section there once lived a young man, the son of a Protestant merchant; and every morning, when on his way to work, he used to meet

a little lad of some ten years or so, the son of a laborer. A nodding acquaintance sprung up between them; and, now and then, a remark was passed. Finally, one very cold winter morning, when the snow was knee-deep, and travelling was almost impossible, the young man, surprised at meeting his little friend out on such a disagreeable day, ventured to ask him where he was going so regularly every morning, regardless of the weather or the season; and this was the simple, boyish answer he received: "I'm going to serve Father John's mass." "Oh," exclaimed the young man, somewhat confusedly, "going to serve Father John's mass, eh!" and, as he pushed on through the drifts of snow, the little fellow's answer kept ringing in his ears. What did the little fellow mean by "serving mass." The seed of enquiry had been sown, and had fallen on good ground; for, the young man shortly after, sought instruction, was baptized in the Catholic Faith, and giving up home and friends, consecrated his life to that God whom he had learned to know and love through the unconscious influence which that little Altar-boy had exerted over him by his remark about serving mass.

In the plastic days of childhood everything makes an impression for good or for evil. Youth, like white paper, takes any impression. It is the formative period of life.

Environment does not create character, but it helps or hinders its growth. It is the old, old story of example and precept. "The child," says Wordsworth, "is father to the man." He is an imitator. He listens to the scolding, but he follows the parental habit. What the child, what the young man, what the young woman requires, is a model, rather than a critic. Environment includes the example of the people at home; their likes and their dislikes; their refinement or their vulgarity; their religious enthusiasm, or their brutal indifference to the needs of the soul. Your children, in fine, are apt to think that what you do is right. They have no other ideal of truth or righteousness but yourselves. They reason this way: Father always does right. Father did this; therefore, this is right. No one ever gets over having a bad example set him. Your conduct, more than your teaching, makes impression. Your laugh, your frown, your dress, your walk, your coming in and your going out, your habits at the table, the tone of your voice, are all making an impression that may last long after you are dead. And the sun will be extinguished, and the mountains will crumble, and the world will die, and eternity will roll on in perpetual cycles; but there will be no diminution of the force of your conduct on the young eyes that saw it, or the young ears that heard it. We are naturally led to assume

that, among those that associate there is a certain sympathy of taste, of character and of disposition.—You know the old adage: “Birds of a feather flock together” or, as modern parody phrases it: “Birds of a feather go by themselves”—and, on this principle is founded that solidarity which is the characteristic of every society, by which the whole body becomes honored by the virtuous actions, or disgraced by the transgressions of the individual members. Now, a well man in the wards of an hospital, surrounded by hundreds that are dying of fever, will not be so apt to contract the disease as a good man or boy would be apt to be smitten with moral disease if shut up with iniquitous companions. In our business relations we may sometimes, of course, find ourselves obliged to talk to, and even to mingle with bad men; but he who deliberately chooses to associate with vicious characters is carrying on a courtship with a Delilah whose shears will clip off all the locks of his strength and, sooner or later, he will be tripped into perdition. You may boast of your strength of character, but go with the corrupt and you will become corrupt; clan with burglars and you will become a burglar; live among the unclean, and you, too, will become unclean.

Do not asscioate with the lad—young or old—who puts his fingers in his vest and laughs at your old fashioned religion; who tells you that he used

to believe what father and mother taught him, but he has got over that now. Yes, he has got over it; and, if you remain very long in his company you will get over it too. Allow a bad man to talk familiarly with you, give him a place at your table to rant in presence of your sons and daughters against the faith that he has not the courage to live up to; permit your home, the one place on earth where religion and piety ought to be nurtured and fostered, to become the rendezvous for a few conceited and bad minded individuals to run down and caricature all that the centuries have held sacred, and need you be at all surprised if you see your sons and daughters no better than the scoffer you bring to your home? Without presenting one single argument against the religion of Jesus Christ or the Church that He commands us under pain of eternal separation from Him to hear, the scoffer will destroy your respect for that religion that was the strength of your father in his declining years, and the pillow of your good old mother on her dying day.

A distinguished English, non-Catholic clergyman, shows by an example how much good even young people may do when they stand by the principles of right and duty. He says that, many years ago, in one of the largest non-Catholic colleges in England, no boy in the spacious dormitories of the institution even dared to say his prayers.

One day a new boy, neither strong, nor distinguished, nor influential, nor of high rank, came to the college. The first night the new boy slept in his dormitory not one boy knelt to say his prayers. But the new boy knelt as he had always done. He was jeered at, insulted, pelted, kicked for it; and so he was the next night, and the next. But, after a night or two, not only did the persecutors cease, but another boy knelt down as well as himself; and then another, until it became the custom for every boy to kneel nightly at the altar of his own bedside. From that dormitory, the custom spread to other dormitories, one by one. When that new boy came to the school, no boy said his prayers; when he left, without one act or word on his part, beyond the silent influence of a quiet and brave example, all the boys said their prayers. The right act had prevailed against the bad custom and the blind cowardice of that little world. So will it be with you. If you stand steadfast against wrong, you may start an influence for good that will change the whole current of the society in which you move. The trouble with most people is, not that they willfully and persistently, do wrong, but that they are weak, and their weakness often ends in wickedness. They are surrounded by temptations and yield to them. It is more easy to follow the crowd, than to go against it. The words that a father speaks to his children in the privacy

of home are not heard by the world; but, as in whispering-galleries, sounds are clearly heard at the end, so too are his words heard by posterity. There is no action of man which is not the beginning of such a long chain of consequences, that no human providence is high enough to give us a prospect of the end.

All are familiar, surely, with the story told of the father who took his boy to the banquet, given by some of his friends. When the waiter, in making his rounds, came to the boy he said: "Well, my little man, what will you take"? "I'll take what father takes", replied the youth. The father immediately recognized his responsibility; and, being equal to the situation, said: "Waiter, bring me a glass of water." Still better, may be, the following story: A gentleman had occasion to take a walk early one morning, after a light fall of snow. He met a fine young man, who was the father of a bright eight year old boy. A little farther along, he saw the boy coming and looking intently on the ground, and acting rather strangely. Upon approaching him, the boy looked up beamingly, and, pointing to the ground, said: "There's my father's tracks." And, then, he continued on with long strides in his father's footsteps. Would that all fathers could fully realize the significant import of these childish sayings! Would, that the footprints which all fathers are

leaving on the sands of time were those in which they would be glad to have their children follow. Precept, in truth, is instruction written on the sand; the tide flows over it, and the record is gone. Example is graven on the rock and is not so soon lost. People look at you six days in the week to see what you mean on the seventh. Be, therefore, always a pattern to others, and then all will be well.

The Holy Ghost, speaking through the mouth of the great Apostle Saint Paul, admonishes us of the importance of wisely choosing our companions and of associating only with those who help us to advance in piety and the love of virtue. "Beware," says the Apostle, "of mingling with people who lead sinful lives." "I have written to you, not to keep company, if any man that is named a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or a server of idols, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one not so much as to eat." I Cor. V—II. But it is chiefly in his epistles to his beloved disciples Titus and Timothy, that Saint Paul insists upon this counsel. "Shun," he says, "profane and vain babblings." II Timothy II—16. "Know also this that, in the last days, shall come on dangerous times. Men shall be lovers of themselves, covetous, haughty, proud, blasphemous, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, wicked, without affection, without peace, slander-

ers, * * * traitors, stubborn, puffed up and lovers of themselves more than of God: Having an appearance indeed of godliness, but denying the power thereof. Now these avoid." II Tim. III 1—6.

It is a fact confirmed by Divine Truth Himself that like generally begets like. "All flesh shall consort with the like to itself and every man shall associate himself to his like." "If the wolf shall at any time have fellowship with the lamb, so the sinner with the just." Ecc. XIII. 20. Hence the necessity for young people particularly, to avoid the company of such as are addicted to levity or vice and hence, also, the absolute necessity of choosing virtuous companions in order that their example may serve as a light to guide inexperienced footsteps along the thorny path of life. Parents, of course, may advise; pastors may exhort; but you will never rise above the level of the company you keep. Tell me those with whom you associate and I will tell you what you are. "Might I give counsel to any of my young readers", says the great novelist, William Thackeray, "I would say to him: Try to frequent the company of your betters. In books and life is the most wholesome society. Learn to admire rightly: note what great and good men admired. They admired great things; narrow spirits admire basely, and worship meanly." Lord Chesterfield's advice to his son

was along similar lines: "Choose," said he, "the company of your superiors whenever you can have it, for no man can possibly improve in any company for which he has not respect enough to be under some degree of restraint." You remember that oft-quoted line of Thomas Moore, Ireland's sweetest poet, of the vase that holds a bouquet of fragrant flowers.

"You may break, you may crush the vase, if you will
But the scent of the roses, will hang round it still."

In a sinister sense it is ever thus of evil associations. Your bad companion will pass away, and his very name may be forgotten, but his words and his influence will cleave to your soul to worry it to destruction, long after he who gave it is gone. Many a man and many a woman, too, can truthfully say with that sad but gifted son of genius—Lord Byron:

"The thorns which I have reaped are of the tree
I planted; they have torn me, and I bleed:
I should have known what fruit would spring from such a
seed."

You remember how an imprudent and dangerous conversation with the serpent in Paradise, led to the commission of the first sin on earth. Had our first parent, Eve, fled at once, instead of remaining near the forbidden tree to talk with her deceiver, she would not have fallen into sin. When the evil spirit perceives the good and innocent mingling with evil companions he rejoices in an-

icipation of an early and easy victory. The wily enemy of our salvation knows full well that they who engage in nefarious designs miserably deceive themselves when they think they will go so far and no farther. One fault begets another, one crime follows another, and thus they are impelled continually downward into a depth of guilt, which at the commencement of their career they would have died rather than have incurred. Know, moreover, that the evil consequences of a crime long survive its commission; and, like the ghosts of the murdered, forever haunt the steps of the malefactor. Think not that the guilty require the burning torches of the Furies to agitate and torment them. Their own frauds, their crimes, their remembrances of the past, their terrors of the future, these are the domestic furies that are ever present to the mind of the impious. It is a truth from heaven that "he who loves the danger shall perish in it." The devil who goeth about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour, is exceedingly crafty and very soon spies out in a man's character the weak spots towards which he can point his poisoned arrow of temptation. At first he is content to wound but slightly the ill-fated victim whom he chooses for his prey. At first he leads him into the commission of venial sins. The first nets that he throws out consist of hair-like threads, so thin as to be hardly visible.

If he can succeed in holding his prey merely by the tip of his little finger, the treacherous demon will soon grasp the whole hand, and then drag him body and soul into the bondage of sin.

“Resist beginnings, then, all too late the cure

When ills have gathered strength by long delay.”

Go not about with a man of evil passions, says the inspired writer, and dwell not with those who work iniquity. “With the holy thou wilt become holy,” declares the Psalmist, “and with the impious and godless thou wilt become impious and godless.” When we live habitually with the wicked we become necessarily their victim or their disciple. When we associate, on the contrary, with virtuous men, we form ourselves in imitation of their virtues; or, at least, we lose, every day, something of our faults. No company, in fact, is far preferable to bad company because we are far more apt to catch the vices of others than their virtues, as disease is far more contagious than health. Saint Augustine says that bad company is like a nail driven into a post, which after the first or second blow, may be drawn out with little difficulty; but being once driven up to the head, the pincers cannot take hold to draw it out, but this can only be done by the destruction of the wood.

Whatever may be a man’s disposition for good or for evil when left to himself, he will never

reach that degree of goodness or wickedness that he could under the influence of others. The stage of virtue or vice which he reaches is due in a great measure to his associations.

He may be educated to the highest degree, he may have the disposition to become a saint; he may daily fortify himself with the strongest resolutions against vice, if without necessity he frequent the company of persons disposed to evil he will ere long become a pervert. Know, however, that it is not alone the bold and blatant profligate that we must avoid; for those who decry, openly and publicly, against religion and morality, will so completely disgust you that you will be only too willing and too ready to eschew their company and turn your back upon them at once.

“For vice is a monster of such frightful mein,
That to be hated needs but to be seen.”

But there are siren voices, cunning tempters, veiled hypocrites, who are too cautious and too wary to induce others to sin directly and without disguise. They, therefore, slowly and gradually instil the poison of unchristian thought, till the young heart is suddenly and unexpectedly drawn into the meshes of sin, almost before it has become aware of sin's presence; the evil companion that the boy or girl would not avoid has, by little and little, robbed them of their esteem and love for

virtue. Thus it is that the delicate flower of innocence is lost; and when once lost, it is usually lost forever.

Remember the story of the picture of the child at prayer, for it is like him we all begin, however our after-work may turn out. Every human countenance is either a history or a prophecy. But, when we look into the faces of some of the characters that live around us, and see the meanness and the sensuality that imbrute them, it is hard for us to see in them the faces of once innocent children. For all of us, as must be expected, the years are leaving traces on the canvas; the lines are gradually fading out, and the figures that stood in the background, for most of us, are gone. But the picture we can never cease to admire; and, I venture to say, that, of all the pictures that hang on memory's walls, this one seemeth the best of all. It speaks to us of childhood's home and its cherished connections; of mother and her wise and holy counsels; and of that sweet time when heaven smiled about us.

Fathers and mothers keep this picture always before your eyes and often study it in the little ones growing up around you. Be ever gentle with the children God has given you; watch over them constantly, reprove them earnestly, but not in anger. Be vigilant over them in the dawn of their understanding, lest the after-frosts nip their blos-

soms. Whilst they are tender twigs straighten them; whilst they are new vessels, season them; for such as thou makest them, such, commonly, shalt thou find them. When those little forms that are now so bright and beautiful shall be scattered in the dust, their immortal spirits will live on in a grander theater of action, and your faithfulness or neglect is now deciding their destiny. Be no less watchful over the children of a larger growth—the boys and girls budding into manhood and womanhood. Warn them against the dangers of the saloon, the dance hall, and the ubiquitous allurements and seductive pleasures of this wicked age. Know where they are at night fall, who their associates are, and then you will know what they are themselves. Teach them to cherish virtue; to revere and respect religion and its ministers; and to love their Church and live according to its teachings. In your prayers often commend them to the tender care of Him Who forgives and pities all alike; and, above all, so live yourselves, that you may be a light to their path and a guide to their feet and you will be doubly blessed in the sweet assurance of God's love.

Kindness.

Kind hearts are more than coronets.—Tennyson.

Kindness is nobler than revenge.—Shakespeare.

KINDNESS.

We read in the ninth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles that, when Saint Peter, Prince of the Apostles, traversed the Holy Land, preaching and working miracles, he came in the course of his journeyings to a certain town called Lydda. There lived in another town called Joppa, hard by, a certain christian lady whose life was full of piety and good works. “And it came to pass in those days,” says the narrative, “that she fell sick and died.” Now the disciples, hearing that Saint Peter was in the neighborhood, despatched messengers, requesting him to come to them without delay. He immediately acceded to their request, and was conducted, on his arrival in the town, to the house of the deceased. All at once, the widows and the befriended poor gathered around the Saint, and, with wails and moans, began to show him the coats and garments which the kind-hearted lady had made for them. The narrative ends thus: “And Peter kneeling down prayed: and turning to the body he said: Tabitha, arise. And she opened her eyes: and seeing Peter, she sat

up. And giving her his hand, he lifted her up." While we humbly adore the wonderful power of God, displayed in the miracle wrought at the prayer of His servant, we are, at the same time, constrained to admire the high appreciation of the widow's kindness on the part of these poor people. Indeed, there is no class of people in the world more universally beloved, or more generally sought after, than the kind-hearted. When we hear a person assert that such or such a person is kind-hearted we at once picture to ourselves one who is gentle, affable and magnanimous; one possessed of qualities, which, when combined make a truly generous soul. Take for example, the case of a little child, place him under the tutelage of two persons, one of whom has a sour, surly disposition; who never allows the young one anything for which its childish fancy craves; or, if disposed to gratify its desires, does so in such a manner as to deprive the child of the innocent gratification arising therefrom. The other, on the contrary, has a most agreeable and lovable disposition, and will do all in his power to render the child happy by granting its every legitimate wish with as much cheerfulness and alacrity as possible. To which of these two think you the affections of that child will adhere? In whom will the child have the greater confidence? Most assuredly in the latter. Now what is here said of the child, holds

good for the man, also. For what, after all, are men but children of a larger growth? We are all children in some respects, and in this particular respect, we all find ourselves on an equality: We like, and do appreciate kindness. Suppose we consider then for a moment or two and try to get some idea of what kindness is in itself, and of its effects both upon ourselves and upon others.

Kindness is the overflowing of self upon others. It is putting others in the place of self; we treat them as we would wish to be treated ourselves. For the time being, self is another and others are self. It is the literal application of the golden rule that was taught us in our childhood: "Do unto others, as you would that others should do unto you." Who does not know that the worst kind of unhappiness, as well as the greatest amount of it, comes from our conduct towards one another. If our conduct were always under the dominion of kindness, the world would be pretty much the reverse of what it is, and so the state of things would be vastly different. We are for the most part unhappy, because the world is an unkind world. Yet the Creator certainly meant the world to be a happy one.*

The chief effect of kindness, then, is that it renders us more contented and happy, and makes life itself more pleasant and endurable. We all grow

*Adapted from Father Faber's Conferences on Kindness.

weary, combating the realities of life. The rough schoolboy flees in a rage from the taunts of his companions to find refuge in a mother's smile. The little one, full of grief with its own large trouble, finds a haven of rest on its mother's breast; and so with all of us. The burden of life presses heavily at times upon multitudes of the children of men. It is, oftentimes, a yoke of such a peculiar nature that, familiarity, instead of practically lightening it, only makes it the harder to endure.

There are thousands to whom life is always approaching the unbearable. More than one has, vainly and foolishly, sought refuge from the struggle in self-destruction; while its burdens and cares have driven numbers to hopeless insanity. Again, kindness is a solace for the ills of life; and, besides largely promoting our own happiness, adds very considerably to the peace and happiness of others, and encourages them in their efforts after good. And, do we not all feel the need of encouragement at times? The path of virtue, even when it is not up hill, is rough and thorny, and each day's journey is a little longer than our strength admits. Alas! how many noble hearts have sunk under the trying realities of life. How many plans for God's glory have fallen to the ground, which a bright look or a kind eye would have propped up? A kind act has picked up many a fallen man who

has afterwards slain his thousands and his tens of thousands for his Lord, and has entered the heavenly city at last as a conqueror, amidst the acclamations of the saints and the welcome of His Sovereign.

Criminals, whose hearts had become steeled to all human sensibilities, either through the frequent commission of heinous crimes, total depravity, or both, have become as gentle as lambs, through the mollifying influence of the kind, the generous and the true. Many a sailor on life's rough sea has been encouraged, cheered, and, finally, saved, by a single act of kindness.

Is a comrade discouraged? Do his feet fail and his hands grow weary? A cheering word, a loving service, a friendly suggestion, born of the desire to aid and uplift, will revive him like sparkling water in the desert heat. Such little deeds cost nothing; but, not all the gold and diamonds you could pack into your bundle, would match them for solace on the long and dusty march that stretches out for each one of us between the cradle and the grave. "One little clover is not much, surely, for June to boast of; but, remember, from that single blossom full of seeds, each wind that blows scatters a thousand embryo blossoms, which, in glorious company, shall beautify the meadows and fill the summer fields with sweetness. If every single clover should refuse to blow because of its

individual insignificance, what would become of all that ravishing perfume that makes a June morning so charmingly delightful. Let us see to it then that we fail in no deed of helpful, thoughtful kindness, merely because it seems so small a thing. Each day, if it brings forth only one unselfish deed, will soon add to itself other days which, in time, will enrich and sweeten both our own and other lives.”*

Some one has said, and said truly, that “A fellow feeling makes us wondrous kind.” And, surely, as the days go by, they afford us many and varied opportunities for the exercise of kindness. We live in a world that is full of poverty and suffering, ignorance and misery; and, the plain duty of all of us is, to try to make the little corner that he can influence, somewhat less miserable and somewhat less ignorant than it was before we entered it. And yet, there are thousands of men; and you know some of them and so do I, that breathe, and move, and live, pass off the stage of life, and are heard of no more. Why? Because they never did a particle of good in the world. None were ever blessed by them; none could ever point to them as the instrument of their redemption. Not a line they wrote breathed kindness, not a word they ever uttered could recall it, and so they perished; their light went out in the darkness

*Amber.

and they were not remembered more than the insects of yesterday.

It will be always true, of course, that kindness will sometimes meet with an unworthy, an ungrateful return; but the absence of gratitude on the part of the receiver cannot destroy the self-approbation which recompenses the giver. Some of the seeds of kindness that we scatter around us will inevitably fall on good ground and grow up into benevolence in the minds of others, and all of them will bear fruit of happiness in the bosom whence they spring.

While recommending you to be kind at all times and to all, I would especially insist on its practice towards children, the aged and the poor. Bear in mind, that the boys and girls of to-day will be the men and women of to-morrow, and that they will, in all probability, carry with them to the grave the recollection of their childish sorrows and the indifference and neglect of which they were the object in their early years. It was the poet, Burns, who said, and said truly: "Man's inhumanity to man makes countless thousands mourn." Indeed, the inhumanities and outrages practised upon children by witless parents are really heartrending. If they treated their flower beds as they do their children, there would not be a blossom left in their gardens. Now and then, we meet a wise mother and a sensible father; but

the great majority of parents receive their children as the youngsters receive their Christmas toys, to be played with when in good humor, but bundled anywhere, when out of sorts or engrossed with more important matters. There are many sides to a child's character; and too many parents lose sight of the fact that, a little child's sense of injustice and sorrow and wrong, is compatible with its own growth and experience, rather than their own. What to the parent seems but a paltry trial, is the cause of keenest, unalloyed woe to the child of five or six. The possession of uncounted gold at forty, will not be more precious than the possession at four, of the toy or the book you so rudely snatch from the little hands without a word of apology. Instead of sending him off with a clip or a cuff, take the time to explain to the little fellow, why you deprive him of some cherished possession, and you will save the tender bit of a heart a vast amount of unnecessary aching.'**
On no account whatever ignore the disposition of your children to investigate. Help them to understand things; teach them to know what they are about. A proper amount of confidence, and words of encouragement and advice, will do more, and go a great deal farther with them, than any amount of harshness and severity.

And then the aged, to whom life, at best, is but

**Amber.

a wintry day, be kind to them, also: try to render their declining years peaceful and happy. Give father and mother, and grandfather and grandmother, if you have them with you, the cosiest place at your fireside, and the best and choicest of your table. Not so much as once make them think, much less, make them feel, that they are in the way, or that you do not want them around. Would you know the answer that a certain young fellow gave, when asked if the boys of the home started the fire for the old folks in the morning? "Oh, no, he replied, we let the old folks do that themselves; we want to wear them out first, you know." Take care, young man, God sometimes works in a mysterious way. These thoughts will take a deeper root within you, if you reflect, for a moment, on the strange sympathy that exists between the two extremes of life—childhood and age. How intuitively in age, remarks Charles Dickens, we go back with a longing fondness to all that is fresh in the earliest dawn of youth. If we never cared for little children before, we delight to see them roll on the grass over which we hobble on crutches. The grandsire turns, wearily, from the middle-aged care-worn son, to listen with infant laugh to the prattle of an infant grandchild. It is the old who plant young trees; it is the old who are most saddened by the approach of winter and who feel most delight in the coming spring.

Finally, be kind to the deserving poor, that portion of humanity that the Saviour has declared will be always with us. Give them, at least, a kindly eye and a sympathetic voice. A helping hand to one in trouble is often like a switch on a railroad track, but one inch between wreck and smooth-rolling prosperity. Sympathy, in fact, for the deserving poor and the afflicted, is the first great lesson that man should learn; and, nothing is more odious than that cold-hearted insensibility that wraps a man up in himself and his own concerns, and prevents his being moved with either the joys or the sorrows of others. On the other hand, to be full of goodness and kindness and helpful hope, towards the down-trodden and the afflicted, causes a man to carry blessings of which he himself is as unconscious, as a lamp is of its own light.

The aged Tobias, one of the most lovable characters in Holy Writ, understood this well, and embodied it in the dying advice he gave his son: "My son, all the days of thy life, have God in thy mind; and take heed that thou never consent to sin, nor transgress the commandments of the Lord our God. Give alms out of thy substance and turn not away thy face from any poor person; for so it shall come to pass that the face of the Lord shall not be turned away from thee. According to thy ability, be merciful. If thou have much, give abun-

dantly; if thou have little, take care even so to bestow willingly a little. For thus thou storest up a good reward for the day of necessity. For alms deliver from all sin and from death, and will not suffer the soul to go into darkness.”—C. IV.—

I

And if some people slight you,
Never mind;
If others wrong you,
Still keep kind.
If some ill-judge you,
Unto yourself be true;
By doing unto them, as you
Would have them do to you.

II

What if some people snub you
For the clothes you wear.
What if others twit you
Because you lack a gayish air?
What does it really matter?
Do not hold a spite;
Cheerily tread life's pathway,
Leading unto right.

III

Try to forgive the wrongs
That others do you.
You will need forgiveness
For the wrongs you do;
Always do your duty
With a kind word or a smile;
And, believe me, you'll find
All wrongs righted in the after-while.

Hanily.

Vanity of vanities, and all is vanity.

—Ecclesiastes C. I.

VANITY.

ONCE again the year in its rounded course has brought us to that period in which the general aspect of the things about us is calculated to impress upon us the truth and importance of the fact that all these things, like the year itself, are coming near their end.

The autumnal season, more than any other, is especially and significantly fitted to inspire us, in spite of our very selves, with thoughts of a serious and melancholy turn. The evidences of decay and death that are everywhere apparent in the world about us, the fading flower, the sear and yellow leaf, the ripening grain, and the departure from our midst of nature's songsters, the dear little birds, are all very fittingly calculated to excite within us thoughts in which most of us do not love to revel.

The reflections that nature forces upon us, at this particular season, have suggested to me, therefore, the propriety of directing your attention to-day, to a subject to which, I believe, these

same reflections must naturally and reasonably lead us, namely, the "Vanity of Life and the Nothingness of all things Earthly."

I suppose it is the simple truth to say that there never was, and that, probably, there never will be, a man who enjoyed more of the good things of life, in every variety of form and diversity of object, than did Solomon, the son of David, and the first King of Israel. His position and circumstances placed within his reach all the pleasures which the heart of man can enjoy here below. He was filled with a wisdom greater than that vouchsafed to any other man. He built cities and temples; he was visited by Kings and Queens, admired and almost worshipped as a god on account of the magnificence by which he was surrounded, and yet he was not happy. But listen to his own confession, ponder it well and judge for yourselves: "I heaped together for myself silver and gold and the wealth of Kings and provinces; and I surpassed in riches all that were before me in Jerusalem; my wisdom also remained with me; and whatever my eyes desired I refused them not and I withheld not my heart from enjoying every pleasure and delighting itself in all the things I had prepared. And, when I turned myself to all the works which my hands had wrought, and the labors wherein I had labor-

ed in vain, I found in all things vanity and vexation of mind and that nothing was lasting under the sun." (Eccl. II.)

Here is the confession of the wisest of men—a man who tasted more of this world's happiness than any other, and yet he found it imperfect, and even vexatious, because nothing was lasting under the sun. Solomon died leaving the world in doubt whether he is eternally saved or lost. Some are of the opinion that the verdict he pronounced on the vanity of all earthly things is indicative of his conversion and return to God towards the last. The experience of King Solomon and the words in which he expressed his realization of the hollowness of all earthly pursuits, "Vanity of vanities and all is Vanity", has been the experience of all succeeding generations and will continue to be the unfailing experience of every man that lives while time runs on. Why is it, then, that the world never will and never can quiet the restless spirit of man? Why is it impossible for earthly things to fill up the void in his heart? The answer is evident, certain and indisputable. Because it is not made for perishable goods or passing joys; or, as St. Augustine beautifully expresses it:

Our hearts, O God, were made for Thee.

And restless must they be,

Until they rest, until they rest in Thee.

Were the heart of man made for the things of earth, these things would, of course, satisfy it.

Were it made to enjoy earthly delights and the pleasures of the flesh, then such things, when obtained, would necessarily constitute it in a position of perfect peace. But, since they do not satisfy it, never will and never can satisfy it, under any conceivable circumstances, it must follow with absolute certainty and strictness of logic that man was made for something nobler, grander and better. God, being infinitely wise and good, must have adapted man, like all other creatures, to the end for which He created him. In fact, all nature, as we contemplate it, confirms and puts the seal of truth on this statement. I look around me and I see that the beauties of art and nature are constantly changing, and that, in time, all created things grow old, wither and decay. The rocks crumble, the leaves fade, the grass withers, the clouds are fleeing by us and the waters flowing onwards to the sea. Vernal tenderness, summer splendors, autumn glories, come and go. The snows of winter cover hill and dale with a robe of purest white, but soon disappear. Flowers droop, roses wither and die. Childhood, youth, maturity, decay. The rising sun reminds us of the fond anticipations of the noon of life, the passing cloud that dims its brilliant lustre, just as it is attaining its meridian splendor, brings to our recollection a period in which we intend to realize our brightest hopes;

and yet that very time is oft consumed in the gloom of cloudy days and starless nights. Its reflected rays, as it disappears beyond the Western hills, tell us that the most brilliant career passes like the meteor's flash and that every beauty, every treasure, every joy, must by the law that rules contingency, vanish like a dream. Nor can the proudest works of man afford us any positive assurance of a more lasting duration. The ivy clings to the mouldering tower and ruins the walls it embraces; the wild flower grows along the battered casement, and deserted is the ancestral hall that once resounded to the voice of merriment and gayety. The fairest forms of chiseled marble which seemed to reflect the purest nobility of character, attest as much their own inevitable decay as they do the mutability of the hand that wrought them. Have you ever visited one of those old, ancestral domains that you have certainly read about in romance and history? Nothing, I believe, impresses the mind with a deeper feeling of loneliness than to tread the silent and deserted scene of former throng and pageant. Nothing, more than this, so well calculated to fill us with such an awful and surprising sense of the vanity of life, the emptiness of renown and the certainty of oblivion.

This country is far from being rich in relics of this kind; and, the few that are scattered here and

there, have mostly but a local reputation, and are exceedingly weak in comparison with the many historical domains of the old world. I have two places in mind just now that come nearest to anything in this line that I could give you from my own experience. A few miles from the college where I made my studies and on land owned by the celebrated C.— family of Maryland, there stood a large stone house, fashioned in accordance with the architecture of Colonial times. The place was known the country round as “The Folly” and every student that passed through Saint Charles’ Classic halls was supposed some time during his collegiate career, to pay the place a visit. The approach to the domain was reached by crossing a narrow stream of water which was spanned by a magnificent stone arch. The futility of such an expensive outlay over such an insignificant body of water, gave to this quondam lovely demesne the reproachful epithet of “The Folly.” The house itself, which was then entirely abandoned, was a large and commodious brick structure and had been, undoubtedly, the scene of many distinguished gatherings during the trying years of the great Civil War. The air of melancholy and mystery that seemed to pervade the entire surroundings, that unconquerable feeling of timidity and awe that invariably preceded, accompanied and followed a journey through the de-

sented apartments, and, above all, that surreptitious peep into the desolate dungeon, where many a poor slave is said to have yielded to the over-exacting requirements of cruel masters, all lent to this relic of vanity and human folly the unenviable reputation that usually attaches to a haunted house.

The other ancestral domain to which I refer was located on the most beautiful and picturesque river of America—the lordly Hudson. No state in the Union is richer in domains of this kind than the great Empire State; and, no part of the state itself, contains so many, as that portion of it where the land verges towards the sea. The celebrated D.—Estate of New York is one of these, and, like its sister domain, perched on the green hill of Maryland, is now abandoned by its former occupants and given over to the ravages of time. On the occasion that I visited it only one member of the family survived—an elderly gentleman—who lived a lonely life in the little gate house at the entrance, where he kept guard over all that remained of this once flourishing pile.

Such is life, and sad are the impressions that these things invariably leave upon us. As we move among such scenes as these we are overpowered by a strange sensation. The vanity of life is over it all; and we feel that, like the waves of the sea, we follow one another, each in turn,

breaking and disappearing as it strikes against the eternal shore. We trace these thoughts to their final and logical conclusion and we force upon ourselves the conviction of the wisest of men: Vanity of vanities and all is Vanity—Except to love God and serve Him alone.

As we remarked at the outset the "Vanity of Life" is a subject quite naturally suggested to us, and even forced upon us, at this time by the dreary aspect that all nature takes on at this particular season of the year. Aside from this, and even assuming that the autumnal season has no suggestiveness for us, I venture to say that the man has never lived, and never will live who has not, at some time or other, fallen under that strange idiosyncrasy for which we can find no better and no truer name than "The Vanity of Life."

It was a custom among the ancient Egyptians to place a skull in the center of the table at all their banquets and feasts, in order that the hideous suggestion that death ends all, might occupy the minds of the guests. Here where every element of life abounded and was running riot in its exuberance the center of the scene was occupied by the symbol of death. Very many suppose that the conception was a restraining one and that the effect was chastening to the mind of the beholder. Quite the contrary. As each eye caught this em-

blem of death, the revelry grew louder, the pulse beat higher in the enjoyment of the present moment, the jest became broader and more boisterous, and all thought of restraint was flung to the four winds of heaven. The suggestion of the hideous Death's head at the feast is the grossly pagan, materialistic thought that dominates the minds of many of the voluptuaries of this progressive twentieth century: "Let us eat, drink and be merry, for to-morrow we die."

The second picture that I would sketch for you is an imaginative reproduction of the great artist Guido's famous painting of Saint Mary Magdalen. We are told in the gospel that a certain woman who had fallen into very grave disorder in her youth, and who, in consequence, was delivered over to be possessed by seven devils, came to Jesus in the house of Simon the Pharisee, and, by her deep compunction, deserved to hear from Him the benign and consoling assurance that her sins were forgiven her. The soft accents, winning pleading and clear reasoning of the greatest of all moral teachers had lifted the attention of this erring one to a life of higher aims, had inspired her heart with a desire for more lasting pleasures, and had directed the longings of her soul to the winning of a crown that fadeth not away. Up to this very day the Holy Cave near Marseilles in France is still pointed out where Mary Magdalen,

after the departure of her Lord and Master from this earth, passed thirty years in hard and bitter penance, and the picture that the great artist has painted of her represents her in her solitary home, bent in profound meditation over a like emblem of death—a hideous skull—that occupied the center of the Egyptian banquet table.

In these two pictures we have two ways of looking at life and death, typical of the two broad ways into which the human family divides. The Egyptian at the banquet and Saint Mary Magdalen in her lonely cave, both saw the vanity of life but from wide and divergent viewpoints. And the world to-day is full of men and women who at life's feast see the Egyptian skull before them, not to exercise restraint, not to chasten their enjoyments, but to make wilder the hurricane of debauch as each lip exclaims in the delirium of momentary delight: "Let us eat, drink and be merry for to-morrow we die."

And the world also has many noble, saintly souls who like Mary Magdalen have the emblem of death ever present to the eye of their imagination to remind them that the most intense joys of earth, the world and all its possessions, life and everything that it brings, are all transient like the grass of the field which flourishes for a moment and then passes away. Well, indeed, will it be for us if, like all God's servants, we see the vanity of

the world from this viewpoint. If like them we always bear well in mind that all we carry through the grave across the dark river of death with its deep, cold stream, which no human footstep has ever retraced, is our character and good works. Our possessions we leave to others to enjoy or squander as they will. The dearest ties of friendship are disrupted. The fame of the greatest scarcely outlasts the torches that light the funeral march to the grave. Not what we have, but what we are, is the one thing that survives us as our sole possession in the life to come. Mindful of these things how forcibly, here and now, comes home to us the abiding declaration of the Savior: "Unum est necessarium." "One thing is necessary"—the salvation of my immortal soul.

While everything around us contributes to disclose to us the vanity of life and to defeat our endeavors after perfect happiness here below, there are four things, all, or anyone of which, must, sooner or later, convince the most skeptical of its unfailing truth, namely, riches, pleasures, fame, and finally, death. There is, in fact, as all should know, a burden of care in getting riches, fear in keeping them, temptation in using them, guilt in abusing them, sorrow in losing them, and an awful account to be given at last concerning them. Wealth, after all, is only a relative thing, since he that has little and wants less, is richer

than he that has much but wants more. And, surely, he that has wealth and will not permit it to do any good to others while he is living, prevents it from doing any good to himself when he is dead; and, by an egotism that is suicidal, cuts himself off from the truest pleasure here and the highest happiness hereafter. We brought nothing with us into the world and certainly we shall take nothing away; and, the greater progress we make in the science of the saints the clearer shall be our insight into the folly of riches and the sooner shall we discover the vanity of all earthly possessions. "Let the kings and princes of earth", said Saint Paulinus, "have their kingdoms and their riches, my riches and my possessions shall be Thee alone, O my God."

"Give me, O God, Thy love and Thy grace", was always the prayer of Saint Ignatius, that is, grant that I may always love and be loved by Thee, and I am rich enough, I ask and desire nothing more.

Surely, I need not tell you how short-lived, empty and vain are all the pleasures of earth. They trouble us in seeking them, they do not satisfy us in possessing them and they make us despair in losing them.

"A merry evening", says the devout author of the Imitation of Christ, "oftentimes maketh a sad morning, and a joyful going forth, begeth a sor-

rowful return home.” Pleasure and sorrow are twins. Furthermore, the objects wherein men look for pleasure here on earth are not only finite in their nature, but they are, at very best, but few in number. Indeed, could a man’s life be so contrived that he could have a new pleasure ever ready at his hand as soon as he was grown weary of the old, and every day enjoy a virgin delight, he might, then, and for a while, think himself happy in the continued succession of new acquisitions. But alas! Nature does not treat us with this variety; the compass of our enjoyments is much shorter than our lives and there is a periodical circulation of our pleasures as well as of our days. Our enjoyments run in perpetual round like the months in the calendar but with a quicker revolution. We rise like the sun and run the same course we did the day before and to-morrow is but the same over again.

The vanity of pleasure has been so fully treated by philosophers, poets and divines, and is, withal, so obvious to every thinking man that it were needless for me to tarry longer on this point. If it were left to me, however, to select the best that has been said on the matter, in concise, truthful and beautiful language by any particular class of men, from their own observation, study and personal knowledge combined, I believe I should select the poet; and if, again, to give freedom to

my choice, it were permitted me to go down the long line of poetic genius, I should single out but three—Burns, Byron, and Moore—which three have probably best expressed what all the others must certainly have felt.

“Pleasures,” said Burns, “are like the poppies spread,
You seize the flower, its bloom is shed;
Or like the snow flake on the river,
A moment seen, then lost forever.”

Byron declares that

“Though sages may pour out their wisdom’s treasure,
There is no sterner moralist than pleasure.”

And Moore, who certainly knew whereof he spoke, assures us that

“This world is all a fleeting show
For man’s illusion given;
The smiles of joy, the tears of woe,
Deceitful shine, deceitful flow,
There’s nothing true but heaven.”

Now, if riches have wings and grandeur is but a dream, if pleasure is so evanescent and fleeting, I take it as truth to say that fame, is the least enduring of all. There is no employment in the world so laborious as that of making for one’s self a great name; for, in most cases, life ends before one has scarcely finished the first rough draught of his work. One thing we may put down as certain with regard to fame: for most of us, it will be exceedingly brief in itself; for all of us, it will be strangely transient in our enjoyment of it. When death has dropped the curtain we shall hear no more applause. And, though we fondly dream

that it will continue after we have left the stage, we do not realize how quickly it will die away in silence while the audience turns to look at the new actor and the next scene. Our position in society, whatever it may be, will be filled as soon as it is vacated and our name remembered only for a moment. Perchance, a few of our nearest and dearest will bear our likeness in their bosoms till they, too, arrive at the end of their journey and enter the dark dwelling of unconsciousness. A stone, perhaps, will tell some wanderer where we lie, but this, too, will, ere long, refuse to perform its office. Time's effacing finger will soon wear it smooth; and the wanderer of another age, passing without a single call upon his sympathies, over our unheeded graves, will not know that we ever existed. "When I reflect", said the poet, Pope, "what an inconsiderable little atom every single man is with respect to the whole creation, me thinks it is a shame to be concerned at the removal of such a trivial animal as I am. The morning after my exit, the sun will rise as bright as ever, the flowers will smell as sweet, the plants spring as green, the world will go on in its old course, people will laugh as heartily and marry as fast as they were used to do." Truly, "the memory of a man," as it is elegantly expressed in the Book of Wisdom, "passeth away as the remembrance of a guest that tarrieth but one day!"

"The rust will find the sword of fame,,
The dust will hide the crown;
Ay, none shall nail so high his name.
Time will not tear it down."

Oblivion with her sponge will eventually wipe the proudest name from the tablet of human recollection; and the bustling hero of this little drama will be heard of, and thought of, and finally, even dreamed of, no more.

If then you or I ever find ourselves growing discouraged with our lot, or miserable because we are not great, here is a thought that should give us courage. For eleven hundred years, proud, imperial, pagan Rome was the center and mistress of the known world. To-day the language of the Romans has almost been forgotten and the Roman capital has no commercial importance. Her statesmen and philosophers, her orators and poets, her warriors and soldiers, who invaded and subdued every known country at the Roman period: her Virgils, her Ciceros and her Cæsars are now only names, simply that and nothing more to the average man.

We read of one of the greatest of Turkish rulers, Saladan, that, when he found his end approaching, he commanded the shroud in which his body was to be enveloped to be carried through the streets, and a messenger to go before, crying out with a loud voice: "Behold what Saladan,

the mighty Conqueror of the East, carries away with him of all his vast dominions."

The Roman Emperor, Septimius Severus, some moments before expiring cried aloud: "Omnia fui, sed nihil expedit." "I have been all things and all things are nothing: and I have nowhere found solid content and happiness."

Among the papers of a celebrated Arabian Monarch, the following note was found after his death: "I have been Caliph for fifty years and I have enjoyed all that men can possibly enjoy here on earth. Being desirous to know the number of days in which during this long period my heart was truly satisfied, I found it, upon exact enumeration, to amount to fourteen only. Mortals, learn from me how to appreciate worldly grandeur and this transitory life."

But why call upon the dead of the centuries and centuries ago to witness to the vanity of worldly fame, when history bristles with instances much nearer home and closer to our own times. Let me freshen your memory on this matter with the experience of but one well known historical personage—Napoleon Bonaparte. Passing over all references to the marvellous military career of this extraordinary man, taking no notice whatever of his personal endowments, physical or otherwise, of his abilities, natural or acquired, or of the opinions, pro and con, that history retains of him, I

wish merely, for the present, to give you in his own words, the impression that all these things made upon him at the last. After an almost unprecedented succession of victories, after having brought all Europe to his feet, after having made himself the idol of some, and the terror of other nations, he suffered, as you know, defeat in the end, and, finally, sought hospitality and protection from the very nation he had fought so long. Subsequently, on the thirteenth of October, Eighteen hundred and fifteen, he was exiled by the British government to the lonely island of Saint Helena where he died on the fifth of May, eighteen hundred and twenty-one. Here, on this rock-ribbed and desolate island, twelve hundred miles from the shores of Africa, Napoleon lived, guarded as no other prisoner ever was, or ever will be, for nearly six years.

“Does your government mean to detain me upon this rock till the day of my death”, said Napoleon, shortly after his arrival, to one of his guards? “I am sorry to say, Sir,” replied the English officer, “that such, I apprehend, is their purpose.” “Well, then, replied the Emperor, “the end of my life will soon arrive.” Among the thoughts that the world will longest treasure are those that were caught by eager listeners as they fell from the lips of this ill-fated man on the rocky shores of Saint Helena: “I shall soon be in my grave.

Such is the fate of great men. So it was with the Cæsars and Alexanders, and I, too, am forgotten. My exploits are tasks given to pupils by their tutor who sits in judgment over me. I die before my time and my dead body must return to earth to be the food of worms. Behold the destiny now at hand for him who has been called the Great Napoleon! What an abyss between my great misery and the eternal reign of Christ who is proclaimed loved and adored over the whole world."

Sic transit Gloria Mundi. So passes the glory of the world. "*Vanitas Vanitatum et omnia vanitas, nisi amare Deum et Illi soli servire.*" "Vanity of Vanities and all is vanity, but to love God and serve Him alone."

Scandal.

But he that shall scandalize one of these little ones that believe in me, it were better for him that a mill-stone should be hanged about his neck, and that he should be drowned in the depth of the sea.

Woe to the world because of scandals. For it must needs be that scandals come: but nevertheless woe to that man by whom the scandal cometh. Matt. XVIII 6—7.

SCANDAL.

IT may be somewhat difficult for us to conceive how our Blessed Lord should declare it necessary that scandals should come, and, in the very same breath, pronounce a woe against their authors. The difficulty, however, will easily disappear when we try to understand our Blessed Lord's meaning. He did not mean to insinuate their absolute necessity; He merely wished to imply that, considering the frailty and depravity of human nature, and the many incentives to evil that are daily thrown around us, they are, in a manner, inevitable. If the various dispositions and corruptions of so many men, together with their levity, ambition and cupidity are taken into account, it is not possible but that sometimes by some, yea, frequently by many, there should be crimes that cause others to stumble. Nevertheless, woe to the individual by whom the scandal cometh, because he determinately and of his own free will, in this or that indiscreet or wicked action, sins mortally himself and is the cause of spiritual ruin to the little ones of Christ. That scandals do exist in the world is a fact that can not be denied. Neither does it

require a very extensive acquaintance with men and things to learn that, if the present age is one of enlightenment and progress, it is one, also, of pretty general moral depravity.

Nowadays, crimes of a most shocking and revolting nature are ordinary occurrences, and no longer appear to arouse the indignation or excite the horrors of the multitude. The daily press, in hideous terms, recounts cases ever increasing in number of dishonesty, perjury, murder and suicide—nay, cases in all phases of immorality, with their concomitant disorders. Virtue is on the wane; vice is becoming popular. The beardless youths and thoughtless girls that parade the streets of our cities and towns tell of anything but modesty and propriety in their gait, words, and gestures. It is, indeed, very much to be feared that the rising generation bids fair to be even more godless, more unprincipled than the one that is gradually disappearing.

And at this we need not be at all surprised; for, prone to evil as are the senses of man from his youth, bad example, now, as in the past, will find people ready, nay eager to copy its results.

From the day when the boy first crosses the threshold of the Public School, till the moment he is said to have completed his education, he learns much that in a greater or less degree alienates him from God, and estranges him from the

higher aspirations of human nature, for the germs of noble thought are often nipped in the bud; crushed and destroyed in their very seed. Religion is largely ignored; or, if it is at all professed, it is merely a dead branch of the only true tree that can lay any lasting claim on the conscience of the multitude. When principles such as these are engrafted upon the young mind it must follow that his future career will reveal the practical side of them. Nay, when even Catholics themselves will entrust the education of their children to irreligious minded men and women, they need not be at all surprised if, in later life, those same children pursue a course for which the parents can blame themselves. Oh, how many youthful hopes are blasted, how many young and innocent hearts corrupted, how many once beautiful and promising lives destroyed, by the pernicious influence of bad example! A young man, pure in heart and soul, of generous aims and noble character, with every prospect of a bright and promising career before him, is early thrown upon his own resources, cast out into the rugged scenes of life, with no guide but a good conscience, no boast but his honesty. He comes in contact with men to whom virtue is vice, and vice, virtue. Their evil ways and wicked counsels gradually gain an ascendancy over him,—bad example has gained another victim.

How often do not the columns of the press record the heinous deeds of those, though young in years, yet are old in crime! Youths scarce above the age of reason, led on by the example of older wretches, plunge into the deep dark waters of the river, or send a bullet through their crazy brain, thus to end a life scarce begun.

All this is no exaggeration, it is only a plain statement of facts daily occuring in the life around us.

But let us come a little more to the subject, and see in what consists the essence of scandal, or bad example.

The word "scandal" signifies a stumbling block, and it is employed in Holy Writ to mean an obstacle on the way of another's salvation. Hence by scandal we are to understand all kinds of unedifying words and actions which of their own nature are apt to endanger the virtue and innocence of our neighbor, or which, by reason of his peculiar weakness, become a stumbling block in his way, and actually prove the occasion of the spiritual ruin and consequent damnation of his soul. Any word, deed or omission which is to our neighbor an occasion of falling into sin, is scandal. The deed or omission must be external; for no internal act, so long as it remains so, can be a cause of spiritual ruin to any one but ourselves. Scandal may be direct or indirect,

according as the evil action of another is intended in itself, or in the cause only by which our neighbor is induced to sin. When the spiritual ruin of our neighbor is formally intended, scandal is called diabolical. If, however, our own advantage or pleasure is the object, then it is simply direct scandal; or, in other words, scandal is said to be direct, when a person deliberately intends to induce others to commit sin; and indirect, when he uses language, or gives an example calculated to lead others into sin. Both the one and the other are mortal sins, when they are actually the occasion of anyone committing a grievous fault. Again, scandal is active or passive. Active scandal is scandal given; passive scandal is scandal taken. It is evident that scandal can sometimes be active, or scandal given, without, however, being passive, or scandal taken; and so, too, scandal may be taken without being given; in the latter case, the scandal is not properly attributable to the action of another, but rather to the ignorance, imagination, or even malice, of him who takes it. If the scandal is due to the ignorance or peculiar weakness of the one who takes it, it is called scandal of the weak; if it arises from the sheer malice of the person, it is called pharisaical.

Those who are hardened in sin and who have drunk deep of every forbidden cup, are not easily

scandalized—but the impressionable young and the innocent, whom “a breath can slay as a breath hath made them”, easily fall victims to its poisonous darts. Youth like white paper takes any impression. “Father, I am walking right in your foot-steps”, said the child, and the father, on looking around, saw that, to shorten his journey, he had taken a very dangerous path. He hastily grasped his little one by the hand and hurried back to take a more circuitous route, but one which he knew would be perfectly safe, if the child ever followed him again.

Believe me, children have a way of their own of finding out what their parents are. You may be able to deceive your acquaintances and friends who see you only occasionally, and know you only partially; but not so the children who grow up around you in the home. Your modes, and manners, and undesigned examples are remembered, long years after, when the children have gone out into the wide world, and they are better or worse for the memories. Be more prudent, then, even for your children than you are for yourselves. For, when they too become parents, they will imitate you and each of you will have prepared happy generations who will transmit, together with your memory, the fame of your wisdom.

It is difficult, indeed, to imagine how persons

responsible for children and domestics can seriously think on the diabolical nature of scandal-giving, and the woes pronounced against it by our Blessed Lord, and still continue to be rocks of scandal in their own families.

They are such, to be sure, as often as they show themselves indifferent to the sacred duties of religion; and they are nothing short of it, when their language and actions are unchristian, or as often as they tolerate the like in their own homes and in the presence of their families.

In this world of glare and glitter it is not at all surprising if the weakminded and the young are sometimes enticed to stray from the path of rectitude and duty. Even parents who are good themselves, and who surround their homes with every possible safe guard and precaution, are, oftentimes, alas! obliged to weep over the waywardness of their sons and daughters. But, when the parents themselves, or the larger brothers and sisters are careless, indifferent, bad, what can you hope for from the younger ones that are witnesses of their example. If the root be rotten, what about the tree? If the parent stock be defective or corrupt, can you wonder if the offspring is weak or tainted? If the source of the stream be polluted, the waters can scarce be pure.

O foolish parents who thus prostitute your vocation! if the woes of scandal-givers will be

great, and we have God's word for it that they will, your deserts will demand their ultimate vengeance of an injured God toward His most ungrateful creatures. You will yet curse the day that you assumed the responsibility to bring up children, not for God, but for His enemy, the devil.

Miserable is the man that gives scandal. "He that shall scandalize one of these little ones that believe in Me", says our Blessed Lord, "it were better for him that a millstone should be hanged about his neck and that he should be drowned in the depth of the sea. (Matt. XVIII).

Now, is there the least glimmer of hope for a man cast into the sea with a millstone about his neck? The Gospel appears to say that there is no greater hope for the salvation of the givers of scandal; and Saint John Chrysostom writes that the Lord is more inclined to show mercy to those who commit other more grievous sins, than to those who are guilty of the sin of scandal. "Scandal, like a reptile crawling over a bright grass, leaves a trail and a stain." Scandal breeds hatred; hatred begets division; division makes faction, and faction brings ruin.

But, I would not have you think that it is parents alone who are making an impression on their children, but all men and women in the world, by their influence and example, are doing

something to benefit or injure those who are to come after them. We may be beautiful flowers shedding peace and happiness around us by the sweet odor of our virtuous lives, or noxious plants that will infect generations yet unborn; but blanks we can not be. The blossom cannot tell what becomes of its odor, and no man can tell what becomes of his influence and example once his deeds have gone on their mission. The tender words, the loving deeds, we scatter for the hearts that throb nearest to us may be immortal seed, springing up into everlasting beauty, not only in our own lives, but in the lives of those born after us.

On the other hand, remember that every wrong road has had a beginning, and that there was a "first time" for putting into practice every evil thought that ever grew into a wicked habit that led to a crime.

There was a "first time" that your little boy told a lie; a first time that the blasphemer used an oath; a first time that the drunkard tasted liquor; a first time when the bad Catholic omitted those sacred duties of religion that in his better moments it must gall him to recall. A first time that the town, city, or government official committed a theft.

It is a mistake to suppose that the force of example is confined to those alone who occupy exalted stations, or who tread the higher walks of

life. The merchant at his desk, the mechanic at his toil, the farmer in the field, the maid in her kitchen, are all contributing their share towards the advancement of good and the suppression of evil, and are all, in their respective stations wielding an influence proportionally as great, as the judge at the bench, or the lawyer at the bar.

Fathers who are intemperate, indifferent and careless; mothers who are false to their duties; children who are disobedient and headstrong; young men who are given to dissipation, and young women who are fond of the world. Politicians whose aim is self, with an ambition to reap the coveted honors, without having the merit or ability to acquire them. Jurists who are open to bribery and lost to all shame and decency; servants who are negligent of duty; employers who are unfaithful, and all who are playing the role of the hypocrite, are sowing the seed which promises to result in a vast amount of evil to those who come after them. "The evil that men do lives after them; the good is oft interred with their bones."

"How criminal, then, to use the words of another, must those nominal and half christians be, who by the pagan lives they lead, disgrace the Christian name, dishonor the sacred character they bear, bring unjust aspersions on the faith they profess, and hinder the conversion of num-

bers of well disposed souls by the scandalous example they give both at home and abroad. Criminal, and highly so, are those Catholics who, by their quarrelings, immoralities, and licentiousness materially injure the cause of religion, and draw bitter reproaches on the Church of God." Yes, and criminal, too, beyond a doubt, are those fathers and mothers, employers and employees, whose words and actions from early morn till late at night, are continual lessons of impiety, of drunkenness, of blasphemy, of execrations and other horrid vices for their unfortunate children and domestics.

It is frightful to consider the consequence that may result from the good or evil that we do. The weakness and malice of men have infested the world with scandals. Nor has war, nor famine, nor pestilence destroyed more bodies then scandal has souls. Like the contagion of the body, this contagion of the soul flies from one to another. Like the ball let fall from on high by the aeronaut, increasing its velocity the farther it travels, scandal acquires new force as it passes down the ages from generation to generation. Woe to the world because of scandals!

If crime is rampant in the world to-day, somebody, surely, is to blame. "It must needs be that scandals come, but woe to the man by whom they come."

If there are mothers bemoaning the hapless fate of fallen daughters, and fathers sighing in vain for the hopeless return of wandering sons, the siren that lured them from virtue's path will some day meet with just retribution.

And what testimony can you give of yourself? Looking back upon your past, and reflecting upon the deeds that fill up the fleeting present, have you no regrets, is there nothing you would wish to alter? If you are a parent, and your children are yet your crown and your joy, bless God for it, and humbly pray that He may ever kindly lead them through the rocks and shoals that beset life's perilous voyage, and land both you and them, at last safe at His feet in heaven. But if even one of the children that God has given you has ever added a sorrow to your soul or a furrow to your brow, see if you can not refer it to the day when your own unguarded conduct, or the influence of another's bad example, which you probably could have warded off, eventually led the way to what you now regret in your son's or daughter's present unpromising career.

The harvest may seem a long way off, but it will most assuredly come, with its burning realities and tremendous consequences. There has always been a seed time and a harvest, a summer and a winter, since the world began. So is it in human life. As summer follows spring, and au-

tumn succeeds summer, and dreary winter comes at last, even so will it be with all who have neglected God's overtures of mercy in Christ. With them the harvest will soon be past and the summer ended, and their condition will be eternally hopeless. "He that observeth the wind shall not sow, and he that regardeth the clouds shall not reap." Every man is personally responsible for his sowing and reaping. To parents and children, to young and old, let me propose in conclusion, those other words of Christ to his disciples: "Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven."

Home.

The first sure symptoms of a mind in health,
Is rest of heart, and pleasure felt at home.

—Young.

HOME.

SOME one has said and said truthfully that the three sweetest words in the English language are Heaven, Home and Mother. As the Church in her office of to-day places before us for our contemplation and imitation the Holy Family of Nazareth, and, as we are just now in the midst of the season of the year when, as we gather about the winter fire side and look around with a sense of sober and sheltered security upon comfortable surroundings, and feel more keenly disposed for the pleasures of the family circle and the delights of domestic felicity, I have thought it well to place before you a few thoughts on the one of these three sweetest words which associates in itself the meaning of the other two, namely, Home. There is a magic in this little word—it is a mystic circle that surrounds comforts and virtues never known beyond its hallowed precincts. If I could gather together for you all the beautiful things that have ever been said or written, in prose or verse, on the charms and endearments of home, what a volume it would make! Home, however, is not merely four square walls, for:

“’Tis home where the heart is
Wherever that be,
In city, on prairie,
On mountain, by sea!”

Even in the huts of far-off Alaska, surrounded by the crashing bergs and the mountains where the snows lie forever and alway, the spirit of home exists. Oliver Goldsmith, one of Ireland’s sweetest poets, whose roving proclivities enabled him to realize and appreciate more fully the value of a settled habitation, wishing to find some spot consigned to real happiness, has left us in his exquisite poem, *The Traveller*, a very beautiful description of the sentiments and manners of the people of the countries through which he passed, each, of course, thinking his own the happiest and the best on earth.

But where to find that happiest spot below
Who can direct, when all pretend to know?
The shudd’ring tenant of the frigid zone
Boldly proclaims that happiest spot his own,
Extols the treasures of his stormy seas,
And his long nights of revelry and ease;
The naked negro panting at the line
Boasts of his golden sands and palmy wine,
Basks in the glare, or stems the tepid wave,
And thanks his gods for all the good they gave.
Such the patriot’s boast, where’er we roam,
His first, best country ever is at home.

In fact, all history, all poetry and all philosophy, point to the home as the birthplace and

nursery of virtue, religion and morality. The domestic relations precede, and, in our present existence, are worth more than all our other social ties. They give the first throb to the heart and unseal the deep fountain of its love. Home is the great school of christian virtue. Its responsibilities, joys, sorrows, smiles, tears, hopes and solitudes form the chief interest of human life. Home is the ever-living fountain of present joys, sweet memories and cherished hopes. Where is the little lad or lass whose eye does not brighten, and whose pace does not quicken while returning from field, forest or school, when nearing the loved spot which he or she calls by the endearing name of home. There the kindest thoughts find rest, and there our dearest recollections, in loving memory, ever fondly turn. I suppose it is the truth to say that there never was a song which, in the sublime simplicity of its lines and the plaintive melody of its air has so entwined itself around the hearts of a people as has the simple, chaste, and tender song of "Home, Sweet Home." But, do you know that the author of those touching words, J. Howard Payne, never had a home. He tells us in one of his memoirs that, often as he wandered, friendless and alone, through the gay and crowded cities of London and Paris, he listened to the rendition of his own beautiful composition in the halls and drawing-rooms of wealth

and fashion, while he himself knew not where he was to get his night's lodging, or his morning meal.

Perhaps the sublimest songstress the world has ever produced was the famous Jenny Lind, pseudonymed the Swedish Nightingale. One evening, many years ago, when some twenty thousand people were assembled in the Old Castle Garden in New York City to listen to her inspiring rendition of some of the Great Masters, as she looked over that immense concourse, eager to catch the closing number on the program—a stranger in a strange land—she paused for a few moments, as if to hold her wings for higher flight, while her thoughts wandered away to her old home across the sea. Then, with deep emotion, she began to pour forth in strains, almost angelic, "Home, Sweet Home." The overpowered throng became restless with emotion and an uproar of applause silenced the music. Tears gushed from the eyes of this great gathering like rain, till a few moments when, the enthusiasm having died away, the pathetic strains of the old song—Home, Sweet Home,—again resounded through the vast building, riveting, as with a spell, those twenty thousand souls, while J. Howard Payne triumphed over the Great Masters of song.

I repeat, and I say, truly and finally, that this little word—home—one of the three sweetest

words in the English tongue—associates in itself the meaning of the other two: for it makes us think of the Home beyond the skies—the everlasting Home in heaven—where they know not the sorrows of time, and where we hope, some day, to meet again, in blissful and indissoluble fellowship and union.

We are nothing, however, if we are not practical; and so I must turn from the beauty side of the subject, to something more commonplace and prosaic. Washington Irving, in one of his works, tells of a good old gentleman whose policy it was to make his children feel that home was the happiest place on earth; and, I value this delicious home-feeling as one of the choicest gifts a parent can bestow. Whether the failure to inculcate and inspire this feeling on the one hand, or to realize and comply with it on the other, be the cause of it or not, certain it is that home life is fast losing its hold on multitudes of this feverish and restless generation. I take it to be one of the surest evidences of retrogression in this American life of ours—the substitution of the club for the home and the passing of Domestic happiness—“the only bliss, of Paradise that has survived the Fall.”

William Cowper, one of England's most charming writers, in one of the cantos of the didactic poem—*The Task*—very beautifully pictures a scene that every home deserving of the name

should present nightly at this particular season of the year. He says:

“Now stir the fire and close the shutters fast;
Let fall the curtains, wheel the sofa round.
And, while the bubbling and loud hissing urn
Throws up a steaming column, and the cups
That cheer but not inebriate wait on each,
So let us welcome peaceful evening in.”

You understand the sentiment of these lines. It is plain enough. When night comes on and darkness shrouds the earth, home is the place to find us. Indeed, a picture worthy of admiration and study it surely is to see, after the work of the day is done, the father and the mother, the sons and the daughters that compose the family circle, grouped around the cosy hearthfire, plying their respective tasks, or seated about the table in the living-room where they gather to read, study and sew. In the home where this obtains, there are likely to be found healthy, happy children; a sweet, loving mother; a prosperous, contented father. There certainly need be no cause for anxiety, worry or care on the part of any that compose such a home because, perhaps, John has gone again to-night to one place of amusement and Julia, to another. Fathers and mothers, hear me, and do not soon forget it: when you see your sons and daughters around you in the home at nightfall, you know that every thing is well; but, when you

can betake yourselves to your rest, while you permit them to go unbridled here, there, and every where, you may, some day, permit this just once too often; and, mayhap, to your bitter and lasting regret. Every home, remember, has an atmosphere of its own; and, oftentimes, it is in the poorest home that the purest joys are found.

May the sweet spirit that ruled the holy abode at Nazareth be always in your home, however humble it may be; and may all who cross its threshold inhale the fragrant odor of the peace and love that there abide. With that good old gentleman of Washington Irving fame, teach your children to feel always and to realize, ever more and more, with their growing years, that it is the best and the happiest spot on earth; in one word, that "there is no place like home."

If home, then, is all that we claim it should be, it is certainly so because of those endearing attractions, the presence of those two, loving souls, father and mother, without which, home would scarcely be deserving of the name. The mother is the angel of the home, but only on condition that the foundation of that home be virtue. Nor can the home know a higher, a holier influence than hers, provided it be a religious influence. Without religion man is a shadow, his very existence, a riddle, and the stupendous scenes of nature that surround him as unmeaning as the leaves

which the Sibyl scattered in the wind. Without religion, man is a diseased creature who would persuade himself that he is well; but woman without religion, is raging and monstrous. Without religion, how, I ask, can a woman become a good wife and a good mother? She may love her child as her natural offspring, but she will care for his body and not for his soul, for she will have failed to understand that her chief mission is to nourish his spiritual life. We can readily comprehend why the enemies of religion make it their purpose and their aim to undermine a woman's faith; for, so long as a child is taught by its mother, it will believe in God. Nor can her teachings be ever entirely erased from the mind. They may grow dormant; influence and association may weaken them; but, no matter how many and evil a lesson may be learned in after life; no matter into what excesses the wayward boy or the wanton girl may plunge, the principles once inculcated by a pious mother will some day revive. Perhaps long years after the angel of death has borne that mother in his chilling embrace, across the dark and shadowy river, away into the glorious Beyond, the cherished remembrance of her early teachings will come back again, urging that unhappy son or daughter to perform, like her, the life work that God has given them to do. Not to cite innumerable other instances, we have, in confirmation of

this, the testimony of the penitent Saint Augustine, who declares in the Book of his Confession that, in all his wanderings, no matter into what excesses he plunged, he could never forget the sweet name of Jesus which he learned at his mother's knee. Happy, thrice happy, the child who enjoys the care of parents who are animated with that true spirit which should dominate the life of every christian, and who are both willing and anxious to impart this spirit to their children from their very infancy. This, then, is the real, the highest duty of parents, to train their children in the holy fear of God and in the practice of solid piety. Beethoven, one of the greatest musical composers that ever lived, was accustomed to say: "Recommend virtue to your children; that alone can make them happy, not gold." Virtue, alone, outlives the pyramids. Her monuments shall last, when the monuments of Egypt fall.

Here, before passing on to other thoughts more in keeping with my theme, permit me to make a reflection on quite a common and a much-to-be-regretted habit, namely, the habit of treating those who are nearest and dearest to us with discourtesy and indifference, while we reserve our affable manners and polite speeches for strangers and acquaintances. When we learn to be polite, not only as society people, but as fathers and mothers, brothers and sisters, parents and chil-

dren, we shall have gone far on our way towards the establishment of happy homes. A happy home is certainly one of the greatest blessings on this side of the Kingdom of Heaven. And, the home where good manners rule and mutual consideration reigns, is bound to be a happy one, though it be the top flat in a tenement, or a poor little hut on the prairie. Now, if there is one thing more than another, that upsets peace and happiness in the home circle, it is undoubtedly disorder. Certain it is that the disorderly home is about the most disagreeable place on earth. The father flees from it to seek comfort at the club or the saloon. The mother herself escapes from it whenever possible, and grows ill-tempered and morose because she can not escape from it oftener. The children gladly avoid it for the school or the street, returning thither only to eat and to sleep. In fact, the disorderly home is not a home at all; but a mere temporary shelter for a group of human beings who are detained there by physical necessity, and who scatter, never more to reassemble, as soon as they can escape from the restraint that now keeps them together. The members of these homes go out from them with very little regret or affectionate remembrance. For them the word "Home" has no tender meaning, and J. Howard Payne's plaintive melody is merely a song.

To have an orderly home, the father and mother must be orderly themselves, and the little ones should be taught the lesson of order as soon as they learn to walk. Order we know is the law of all intelligent existence; and, complete success in the home or in any avocation of life, is hardly attainable without it. Creation is the production of order. Every blade of grass in the field is measured; the green cups and the colored crowns of every flower are curiously counted; the stars of the firmament wheel in cunningly calculated orbits; even the winds and the storms have their laws. "Order," writes Samuel Johnson, "is a lovely nymph, the child of beauty and wisdom; her attendants are comfort, neatness and activity; she is always to be found when sought for; and never appears so lovely as when contrasted with her opponent, Disorder."

Well do I remember how much stress was placed on order, and how greatly it was insisted upon in the college where I made my preparatory studies. At the beginning of each session, the Very Reverend President, a tall, ascetic, fatherly man, who lived to be more than ninety years of age, would read in grave and measured tones for fifteen minutes each evening, during the time allotted for Spiritual Reading, the rule that was to guide our student life. It was prefaced with sentences such as these: "Qui vivit regula, vivit Deo."

“He who lives by rule, lives for God.” “Order leads to God.” “Order is Heaven’s first law.” “Keep order, and order will keep you.”

Order, in fine, is the sanity of the mind, the health of the body, the peace of the city, the security of the state. As the beams to a house, as the bones to the man, so is order to all things. The nearer the condition of our mortal existence approaches to the harmony of the brighter world towards which our hopes aspire, the greater the contentment and happiness that we experience. While, on the contrary, the farther we are removed in our surroundings from the order which is heaven’s first law, the more irreconciled are we to the disappointment and pains to which we are here subjected. Tranquil waters reflect the azure sky; and the well ordered home is the epitome of heaven. Have order, then, in your home, and you will contribute in a very great degree towards making it attractive and happy. This establishment of law and order in the household, requires effort, it is true; but it is worth a thousand times its cost. It means the building up of a home that is worthy of the name; one that will be a sweet and an abiding memory and a helpful inspiration to all its inmates so long as they shall live.

Of all the desolate places in the world, none is more dreary and uninviting, at this season of the

year, particularly, than the home that is cheerless and comfortless. To counteract so unpleasant a condition, many expend an immense amount of money in the purchase of costly chairs, elegant tapestry, rare paintings, and bric-a-brac of antique mould and style, while they altogether overlook an equally essential constituent in the furnishings of every well-regulated home, namely, books. The home that is well-stocked with good books and wholesome, helpful reading, is usually a happy one; and so there should be set aside in every home an especial appropriation for book furniture, backed, of course, by wise and judicious purchases. Nowadays we have public libraries galore and many parish libraries, too; but, there should be home libraries as well. The mind, like the body, has need of food; and, if the children growing up in the household, are not tempted to lay their hands on books, by an appetizing selection made by their parents, they will reach manhood and womanhood mentally dwarfed, deprived of an intimacy with master-minds and a vision over elevated plains that will belittle them for life. Most likely it will be this way: either your children will be elevated by the best of all companions—good books—or they will be perverted by the worst of all—bad ones. Believe me, when a man loves his books he has that which will console him under many sorrows and strengthen him under

various trials. Such a love will keep him at home; and, when a man is at home and happy with his books he must be a churl if he does not, in some way, communicate that happiness to others. "I have sought for happiness in many places," says Thomas a Kempis, "and I have found it only in a little corner with a little book." Fenelon, the renowned pulpit-orator of France, declared that, if the crowns of all the kingdoms of the Empire were laid at his feet, in exchange for his books and his love of reading, he would spurn them all.

You will recall that I began with a reference to the three sweetest words in the English tongue—Heaven, Home and Mother; and, the drift of these periods has been to point out to you a way in which home may be made attractive, peaceful and happy. If I have let fall any word, however slight, calculated to bring about a consummation so much to be desired; any word that may lead parents and children, brothers and sisters, into a closer and a holier union, I shall, indeed, feel richly and abundantly repaid.

In conclusion, I have only to express the hope that, in the years to come, when we are done with the homes of earth and you and I are but a memory, we may all meet together around the Great White Throne, in the only home worth striving for—the eternal Home in Heaven,

The Good Catholic's Daily Life.

And who is he that can hurt you, if you be zealous of good? I. Saint Peter III—13.

And in doing good, let us not fail; for in due time we shall reap, not failing.—Galatians VI—9.

All whatsoever you do in word or in work, all things do ye in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him.—Col. III—17.

THE GOOD CATHOLIC'S DAILY LIFE.

Pre-Lenten Thoughts.

WE stand to-day on the threshold of another Lent. The three Sundays which precede this penitential time are named Septuagesima, Sexagesima and Quinquagesima because they are the seventh, the sixth and the fifth before Passion Sunday. Those three weeks are, therefore, as the prelude to the sorrow and tears of repentance which will purify us and prepare us to worthily celebrate our resurrection, or, our passage to a more holy and blessed life. The Church wishes that the faithful should be prepared for this time of salvation, which is, in itself, a preparation, in order that the voices of the world dying out by degrees in their souls, they may give more attention to the solemn warning of Ash Wednesday.

The thoughts which are here proposed for your consideration are intended to furnish you with some practical suggestions to spend advantageously and well, not only this holy season upon which we are about to enter, but every Lent that

we may be spared to see, and, in fact, every day of our lives. A christian has every day that dawns upon him four great duties to face: he has God to glorify; hell to avoid; heaven to gain, and his soul to save. He who strives earnestly his whole life long to glorify his Maker, will, most assuredly, avoid hell and gain heaven; and, he who gains heaven, will have saved his soul. To save one's soul, then, is the daily, hourly work of every christian; and, to attain this great end, nothing is more conducive, more necessary, than a well regulated life. A life of order and method, a life in which every day and every hour is usefully and profitably employed, cannot be other than a well-spent life. Neither is there anyone, no matter what may be his occupation or calling, who cannot so manage his affairs that order and method may dominate his time and rule his day. "Order," a poet tells us, "is heaven's first law"; and Solomon, the wisest of men, declares "that all things have their season, and that in their times all things pass under heaven."—Eccles III—1.

What admirable harmony do we not behold in the countless worlds that roll without confusion over our heads and bring us flowers and storms in their respective seasons! What mysterious order propels the forces of nature and guides the lesser creations in the paths they so undeviatingly pursue! The order of the Eternal manifests itself

in the sun which rises and in every other natural phenomenon we see about us. And shall man himself, the mirror of the universe, be swayed by caprice and passion and do at all times whatever his tastes, inclinations or particular turn of mind may suggest? If, then, "order is heaven's first law"; if order is our guide to God, and whatever comes from God is always well-ordered, so, as Saint Gregory of Nyssa truthfully and beautifully expresses it, "he who lives according to rule and order, lives according to God." Indeed, he who has no taste for order and who thinks he can live without it, will often be wrong in his judgments, and seldom considerate and conscientious in his actions. With a rule of life, the exact contrary happens; for, the rule which directs everything, constantly recalls the mind to God, renders the soul recollected, and thus the well-regulated order which distinguishes all the exterior actions is reflected within.

When we consider the numerous books written by the great doctors of the Church, and the prodigious works performed by certain men, we ask how they were able to accomplish so much. The secret of the mystery is that everything was weighed with regard to the employment of their time and viewed in the light of the maxim that "living by rule multiplies the hours." Furthermore, when we have a spirit of order about us and know how to arrange

all our moments, we can always find time for everything. Why is it that we see some people frequently idle as though they had nothing to do? Again we see them hurried on by an uneasy ardor which confounds and combines everything as though they would never be able to reach the end of anything; or, always undecided as to what must be done, and, for the most part, employed in what they ought not to be doing at that particular time? The reason is because they have no rule of life, or, if they have one, they do not follow it. "Let all things be done decently and in order", say the Scriptures. "Keep order that order may keep you", is a maxim, and a wise one, of Saint Bernard.

The Catholic man or woman who draws up a rule of life and strives to follow it, does everything well and at the proper time. He resembles the good religious of whom the same Saint Bernard says: "He lives more purely, falls more rarely, rises more promptly, walks more warily, reposes more securely, dies more hopefully, is cleansed more speedily, and is rewarded more abundantly."

Now, to spend the day in a truly christian manner, we must begin it with a spirit of recollection. On rising in the morning, reflect at such time that God is waiting for the first beat of our hearts, and that the Evil One is looking for the same. At

the moment of our awaking, says a writer, our soul is like a calm lake and the first care that ruffles it, is like a stone thrown into its midst. By this is meant that, as our first thoughts make deep and lasting impressions, we ought to be very careful to admit none save such as are good and pure.

How often do we not read of the saints "rising by night", "rising early", "rising at dawn of day!" In that vivid account which the Evangelist Saint Matthew gives of the Resurrection he says: "When it began to dawn, Mary Magdalen came to see the sepulcher." And, the royal psalmist says of himself: "O God, my God, to Thee do I watch at break of day." Ps. LXII.

Few, indeed, have ever lived to a great age, and, fewer still have ever become distinguished for virtue or anything else, who were not in the habit of early rising. If you rise late, you, as a consequence, get to your work or occupation at a late hour, and so, everything goes wrong all day. Benjamin Franklin used to say that "he who rises late may trot all day and not have overtaken his business at night"; and Dean Swift avers that "he never knew any one to arrive at greatness and eminence who lay abed in the morning." I can do every thing in bed, says the lazy wag, except to get out of bed. What a crying shame, how disgraceful, to see hale and hearty men and women turning out of bed at nine and ten o'clock

in the morning, when so many in every walk of life have accomplished a considerable part of their day's duties! There are a great many people, nowadays, and, mayhap, we have run across some of them ourselves, who are at a loss to know what is the matter with them; why their ill-success and so on; and yet, not a very skillful diagnosis is required to discover the secret of their complaint. As we stroll onward from day to day, through sun and shade, and blinding blizzard, too, and, marking as we go, how many toilers and workers there are in our cities and towns, and, also, how many idle ones who only "stand and wait", we are impressed over and over again with the truth that there is something worse than overwork and the name of it is laziness. The man who toils till the great muscles of his arms stand out like cords and his broad shoulders are bent like the limbs of the Norway pine that faces the sea, is a king among men compared to the reckless do-nothings who hang around our street corners, the pool-room and the saloon, ready to take up a grievance at hearsay, or join a riot on general principles. Some day there is going to dawn a morning when the world will wake up to the fact that it is not the peaceable, honest, steady man who is not afraid to work nor to expend some of his well-earned wage in reputable undertakings that causes trouble, but the lazy lounge, the shiftless dead beat,

the niggardly poltroon, and, sometimes, the real nice young men, who would not work, if work were laid at their feet, but who are always alert for deeds of violence aimed at other peoples property and reputation.

But, we are straying from our subject. To acquire the habit of rising early, one, of course, must retire early. Indeed nature seems to have so fitted things that we ought to rest in the forepart of the night, one hour of sleep before midnight, hygienists tell us, is worth more than two hours after. It should be a rule in every christian home, a rule which the head of the home should see is scrupulously adhered to, that all within that home should, ordinarily, have retired by ten o'clock, half-past ten at very latest. This, supposing we place the hour of rising between five and six o'clock in summer, and between six and seven in winter, allows from seven to nine hours of rest which is about what nature requires. As an old rhyme has it:

"Six hours in sleep, in law's grave study, six,
Four spend in prayer; the rest on nature fix."

or, again:

"Seven hours to law, to soothing slumber seven,
Ten to the world allot, and all to heaven."

He, doubtless, who, from his youth onwards, accustoms himself to early rising will be much more

likely to become a virtuous and useful man and will pass his life in both happiness and peace.

The first thoughts of a good Catholic on awaking in the morning, turn to his Creator. He blesses Him Who grants him to see the light of another day, signs himself with the sign of the cross, and makes an offering of himself and all his thoughts, words and actions to His Maker. Then, after the necessary time spent in washing and dressing, he goes on his knees to offer Him his homages in his morning prayer. All our actions should be directed to the Almighty, but more especially the first action of the morning, as it is by this we consecrate to the Supreme Being the rest of the day and draw down the divine blessing upon our work. If it is in anyway possible for you to do so, assist at the adorable sacrifice of the mass every day of your life. People may talk of discoveries in science upsetting all our preconceived notions; but the revolution caused by scientific discovery is simply nothing compared to that wonderful revolution which will take place in your estimate of things, the day you discover the effect produced in your soul by assisting devoutly and attentively at holy mass. Saint Charles Borromeo, Archbishop of Milan, in his rule of life for the people says: "Hear mass every day, if you can." Saint Alphonsus Ligouri counsels the same practice; and Saint Philip Neri obliged all his penitents to

hear mass every day. In purely Catholic countries we find large churches crowded with worshippers before day break every morning; and you would be much surprised, indeed, in passing some of the grandest churches in some large cities to see all the coats, dinner pails, shovels and the like placed outside, while their owners have stepped inside to catch an early mass on their way to work. Some of you may probably be able to recall that edifying account which the daily papers gave a few years ago of a saintly old man who passed away in Saint Mary's church in Chicago, in the tower of which church he had made his home for the last fifteen years of his life. One of the priests connected with the church at the time and who knew him well, declared that he was the most pious man he ever met. Every morning of his life he arose at three o'clock, and never failed to attend the early mass at Saint Peter's church on Clark Street, after which he would hurry back to Saint Mary's for the six o'clock mass, at which mass he seldom failed to receive Holy Communion. Where faith prevails in a town or a parish, the good Catholic thinks nothing of rising a little earlier and of making the half hour of hearing mass as natural a part of the day's programme, as meals, work and relaxation. A college companion of mine who is now doing excellent work in the Master's vineyard, told me that he was

accustomed to ride or walk four miles every morning to hear mass. It is said that all the Catholic kings of England, except, perhaps, Rufus and John, heard mass every day; and, even the unfortunate Henry VIII, in the happy times before he forsook the Faith of his Fathers, heard three and four masses every day.

How many Catholic lawyers, merchants, and men engrossed in business, assist daily at the holy sacrifice; and how many more in easy and convenient circumstances, and how many even of the laboring and industrial classes, could hear mass frequently during the week, if they so desired, but who never think of attending, save on Sundays and Days of Obligation. Will not your worldly affairs run smoother, if you are fortified daily by the graces that flow from the adorable Sacrifice of the Altar? Will not your last hours be happier, if you hear mass oftener? For, there is, believe me, no surer way to secure final perseverance and a happy death, than by going daily to mass. To be within reach of daily mass and to neglect this inestimable privilege and its benefits is enough to set the soul wondering at its own blindness. Oh, on that awful accounting day, which is slowly but surely coming for us all, and when it shall be asked of us, not what great possessions we have acquired, but how religiously we have lived, how will the lively faith and fervent piety of

the many good-souls that, thank God, are earnestly striving to keep themselves unspotted in the midst of this wicked world, arise to confound and condemn the malice and sloth of some among us!

In every well regulated Catholic home there are, of course, appointed hours for meals; and, no member of the family thinks of seating himself at, or arising from table, without first making the sign of the cross and saying those sweet little prayers called the "Grace before and after meals." In many families, the father as head of the home, or, in his absence, the mother asks the blessing aloud. During the course of the day the good Catholic is ever mindful in all that he does of the eye that seeth and the ear that heareth all; he thinks of that dreadful and exacting account he must one day render to the Almighty for every thought and word and deed; he keeps ever present to his mind the shortness of time, the certainty of death and the length of eternity; and he strives so to work and to live that, as his days pass along, they may not pass away.

If it be a matter of importance to commence the day well and to continue it so throughout, it is of no less importance to finish it well, also; and, how, or in what way, can we do this better than by assembling all the family, not only during the Lenten season, but every night of the year, for the recitation of the Rosary. Be faithful to this

beautiful and time-honored custom, and it will draw down upon you blessings, many and rich. The last chief act of the good Catholic's Daily Life is to say his night prayers and make his examination of conscience—duties never omitted by those who seriously desire to advance in virtue. And, as at the beginning of the day you petitioned for grace to live well, so, at its close, remember to beg for the grace to die well. Then, having asked God's pardon, by an act of contrition for the sins of which you may find yourself guilty, make the sign of the cross with holy water, if you have it at hand; and, invoking the names of Jesus, Mary and Joseph, try to fall asleep with some pious thought in your mind.

There is a tender sweetness interwoven with some of our phrases of affectionate greeting which we, oftentimes, employ without much thought and which familiar use robs of their real significance. Good and God spring from the same root and have the same meaning; and, as "Good-by" means simply "God be with you" and "good-day" "God guard the day" so "Good night" is only "God night" or "God guard the night."

The little ones repeat it, as, with shining face and clean hands, and prayers said, they toddle off to bed. Parents and children, brothers and sisters, friends and friends exchange the wish. It is a churlish household, to be sure, in which these

gentle forms of speech are ignored, or do not exist. When we place our heads on our pillows at night we are like voyagers putting out upon an unknown sea. The bark of our life sails on in the darkness that sleep creates, while we are, oftentimes, so heedless and so thoughtless of the perils and dangers that lie around us.

“Strange state of being! (for 'tis still to be)
Senseless to feel, and with sealed eyes to see.”

Sleep is the image of death; and the end we make of every day is emblematical of the end we shall one day make of our lives. Each night, as we take our repose, we should not fail to regard our bed as a figure of the tomb and sleep as an image of death, ever mindful that, beyond all question, these figures will some day become for us realities. Finish, therefore, each day as though it were to be your last. “In peace,” says the Psalmist, “I will sleep and I will rest.” And again, “I have slept and I have taken my rest; and I have risen up because the Lord hath protected me.” Ps. III.

“O Mother of Mercy!
O star of the wave!
O hope of the guilty!
O light of the grave!

Through thee may we come
To the haven of rest;
And see heaven's king
In the courts of the blest.”

Christmastide Considerations.

“And she brought forth her first-born son, and wrapped Him up in swaddling clothes, and laid Him in a manger: because there was no room for them in the inn.” Luke II—7.

CHRISTMASTIDE CONSIDERATIONS.

THE beautiful and time-honored festival of Christmas has once more returned to us, bringing along with it its many pleasant remembrances and joyful associations. And, I do believe that, of the three hundred and sixty-five days of the year, there is none whose approach is so ardently looked forward to, whose arrival affords a greater abundance of peace and happiness to all classes and conditions, and whose departure is more generally regretted, than this same dear old feast day. What day, in fact, more apt to make the universe resound with joy and mirth; what day better calculated to cheer the hearts of all mankind; what day more rich in bounty and precious blessings could the fading year leave behind as a parting gift to mortals, than Christmas with all its attendant scenes of merriment and joy? None, to be sure. Far from dying out or growing lukewarm, the spirit of this glorious feast is becoming more universal and more animated as time goes on. The bitter attacks of those who, forsooth, would reform its celebration by wiping out its characteristic

merriment or joyous pastimes, and the cruel assaults of the cold-hearted materialist who would crush the very object of its gladsome happiness and sweet peace, serve but to enliven and strengthen the enthusiasm which its approach awakens, until we find it at the present day, the most anxiously awaited and gladly greeted festival throughout the year, not only for the grandeur of its religious solemnities, but also for the many and various circumstances of peace, happiness and pleasure that follow in its train. Indeed, of all the old-time festivals, that of Christmas awakens the kindest and most heartfelt associations. The services of our holy Church around this hallowed season are so extremely tender and inspiring, dwelling as they do, on that sweet story of old—the birth of the Babe of Bethlehem and the pastoral scenes that accompanied its announcement; gradually increasing in intensity, fervor and pathos, till they break forth in full jubilee on the ever memorable morning that brought peace and good will to men. Truly, the call to happiness at this season of regenerated feeling seems general, while the spirit prevalent at this particular time inclines to throw open every door, to unlock every heart, and to blend all ranks in one warm, generous flow of kindness and joy. In the days when England was Catholic, the very crowing of the cock, heard sometimes in the profound repose of

the country, "telling the nightwatches to his feathery dames", was thought by many to announce the approach of this sacred season.

The immortal Shakespeare happily alludes to this in his celebrated drama of Hamlet:

"Some say that ever 'gainst that season comes
Wherein our Savior's birth was celebrated,
This bird of dawning singeth all night long:
And, then, they say, no spirit dares stir abroad:
The nights are wholesome; then no planets strike.
No fairy tales, no witch hath power to charm,
So hallowed and so gracious is the time."

Our own Washington Irving, in his fascinating sketches, writes most charmingly of the innocent joys and endearing associations of domestic felicity prevalent at this sacred season. Christmas, too, more than any other day, seems to be the children's feast day and holds out to their innocent hearts, anticipations, charms and pleasures to which the older folks are strangers. The boys and girls of the present long for the day dawn of this beautiful feast with emotions as gladsome and an alacrity as joyful as any that arose in the youthful breasts of the children of twenty years ago. And we, in the full grown years of manhood and womanhood, recalling the cherished associations that entwine themselves around that blissful, happy period, sigh, but sigh in vain, as we remember the Christmases of long ago—the Christmases of childhood—the ardor

with which we awaited their coming and the regret with which we bade them adieu. "It is a beautiful arrangement", also, "derived from days of yore, that this time-honored festival which commemorates the birth of Him Who brought peace and love to men has been made the season for the gathering together of family connections and riveting with closer ties hearts which the cares and pleasures and sorrows of the world are continually effecting to cast loose; of calling back the loved ones who have launched forth on the sea of life and wandered widely asunder, once more to assemble about the paternal hearth, there to grow young again amid the endearing mementoes of childhood."

Christmas, then, bids joy to all, young and old, rich and poor; invites us all to banish care and sadness and enjoy the sweet pleasures of its bright and merry season. Its very nature sanctifies it to all who understand its glorious mysteries; and the faithful tradition that has preserved it for almost twenty centuries constrains even those whose ignorance or prejudice deny to them its true enjoyment to at least yield to the spirit of the day and join its general happiness.

With this much in praise of the season itself and its characteristic features, it is but meet that we should bestow a thought on the magnificent event the day itself commemorates and occupy our-

selves for a while with Him Whose birth was the foundation of all the joy and happiness which Christmas brings.

The long and lingering period of four thousand years had elapsed from the creation and fall of Adam, before the long-promised and anxiously expected Messiah made His appearance upon earth. During the intervening ages mankind was left grovelling in the mass of corruption and misery. Evil was rampant in the world; and, from every quarter, vice cried aloud to heaven for vengeance. The Almighty in His infinite goodness and mercy was pleased from time to time to reiterate the promise of a Redeemer to fallen man, and gradually did He dispose all things for the accomplishment of His wonderful designs. Sinful man felt the need of a Deliverer. For the "Desired of Nations" had the patriarchs prayed and the prophets sighed. The bare expectation and foreknowledge of the signal advantages which were to accrue to mankind from the sublime mystery of the Incarnation, filled all good men with hope and caused them ardently to sigh and incessantly to weep for the fulfillment of this long wished for event. Circumstances foreshadowed the near approach of the telling mystery and appearances gave evidence that the advent of the "Prince of Peace" was not far off. In fine, when the seventy weeks of years, spoken of by the

prophet Daniel, were nearly expired; when the royal scepter had departed from the House of Juda, and the Fourth great Empire foretold by the same prophet was exalted to the pinnacle of its power and greatness; when the Roman wars were brought to a happy conclusion and the world enjoyed the blessings of a general peace, the time appointed for Human Redemption was at hand, and God's eternal decrees were brought about and executed.

Precisely at this juncture, an edict was issued by the Roman Emperor, Augustus, commanding a general enrollment of all the subjects of his empire. The requirements of this official mandate necessitated all who were under allegiance to the Roman Eagle to repair to the respective places of their origin to have their names and their conditions recorded in a public register. The cold-hearted materialist and the worldly-minded student of history will recognize herein nothing beyond the political intrigues of a carnal ruler; but, the spiritual man, the man of piety and faith, will mount to loftier heights and will discern in this authentic act of public registration the designs of an all-ruling Providence Who would thereby manifest to the world the royal descent of the Incarnate God, and Who, till the end of time, will record the names of His faithful followers in the Book of Life Eternal. It was in obedience

to this imperial decree that our Blessed Lady and her chaste spouse, Saint Joseph, of the royal House of David, undertook a long and tedious journey of at least four days, through a mountainous country, from Nazareth where they then dwelt, to Bethlehem, a small town of the tribe of Juda. The difficulty of the way in the cheerless month of December, when short days and the wintry season incommoded the most sturdy traveller, was necessarily attended with many inconveniences to a woman in Mary's delicate condition. On their arrival in the town, they were informed that there was no room for them in the inns, on account of the great concourse of people at that particular time. Night falls, and Joseph seeks through the town for a shelter against its severities. As their appearance betokened poverty and want, they were everywhere despised and rejected, and were, in consequence, obliged to repair for shelter to a cave on the side of a rock, commonly called a stable. They enter there without uttering complaint, or entertaining the slightest resentment against those who had rejected them, but blessing and thanking their Maker Who calls them to walk in the narrow way of sorrow and humiliation. Here, in this vile and contemptible place, in the late hours of a cold and frosty December night, upon the rough hewn boards of a manger, with the sharp and prickly straw as the only quilting of

His crib, the Lord of Lords and the King of kings, was pleased to be born. Here, when the night had half finished its course and the whole creation lay hushed in silence, the undefiled and immaculate Virgin, brought forth her first-born son, wrapped Him in swaddling clothes and laid Him in the Manger. A heavenly light illumines the poor abode where those two angelic beings, Mary and Joseph, humbly kneel in prayer, and wholly lost in contemplation of the stupendous mystery that is accomplished before them, while all else around was darkness. Yes, He Who needs no light to work by; Who so wonderfully fashioned those myriads of stars that shine with blinding brightness in the blue vault above, came at dead of night and when darkness was deepest. "And Thou, Bethlehem Ephrata, art a little one among the thousands of Juda."*

If localities are consecrated in the eyes of whole generations by having been the birth places of great men, and spots where they produced immortal works of genius are held in veneration, what must we think of the hallowed spot where the Incarnate Son of God was born? Surely, it must be a place of pilgrimage while time runs on; and they who cannot go thither in body, must often journey there in mind and heart. Bethlehem is, indeed, a most prolific and inviting theme, well worthy the

*Michaeas V-2.

exclusive contemplation of a long life. We see more there than we can possibly understand; and, even what we cannot understand, fills us full of love and it is love that makes us wise unto salvation. Its mysteries have reversed the judgments of the world; they are the standards by which the last great Judgment shall be measured. The votaries of this twentieth century turn from them with the same disdain which the voluptuaries of Greece and Rome showed for them in the days of the persecuting Caesars. Yet, they are the material that saints are made of; and we, too, must court their friendship, would we arrive at the goal towards which they lead.

“Long centuries,” I quote from Father Faber, “have come and gone since the tidings of peace and good will were first sounded over the Judæan Hills and the world has plunged through many revolutions; in fact, almost everything has changed, for, time moves on, while eternity stands still. But the old Bethlehem of that momentous hour when the Incarnate Son of God lay on the ground amid the cattle in the cave, has never passed away. It lives, not only in the memory of faith, but in faith’s actual realities as well. It lives, not alone in history, art and poetry, but, beyond and above all, in the ever-worshipful reality of the Blessed Sacrament.”

Round the Tabernacle, which is our abiding

Bethlehem, goes on the same world of humble, silent devotion which surrounds the new born Babe. Oh, may it, be ours to realize, ever more and more, that the God of the Eucharist was once the helpless Babe of Bethlehem; and, may He, Who hesitated not to assume for love of us the humiliations of infancy, and Who deigns to dwell forever with us in the sweet sacrament of the Altar, be graciously pleased to inspire all who have received Him to-day, and all who throughout this wide, wide world shall receive Him till the end of time, with the dispositions to accord Him a warmer reception than was given Him by the cold-hearted inhabitants of that inhospitable town.

“Divine Infant Jesus, Whom we behold laid upon straw in the poor stable in which you wished to be born, we adore You in union with Mary, Your Immaculate Mother, and Holy Joseph, Your loving Foster Father. Like them we recognize You as our God; and, like them, while contemplating Your heavenly beauty, we open our hearts to unutterable sentiments of love, admiration, joy and gratitude.

Grant, we beseech Thee, by their merits and prayers, that these sentiments may be ever with us when we kneel before Thee in the Tabernacle where the sacramental species that conceal Thee from our eyes, are but the swaddling clothes that enfold Thee to try our faith. Bless us, Holy Child, each and all; suffer us not to frustrate the designs of Thy mercy by our perverseness; but give us grace to begin with Thee a new life from this happy day of Thy joyful nativity, and, to persevere to the end, faithful and steady, in Thy service.”

Post-Christmas Thoughts.

“He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not. He came unto His own, and His own received Him not. But as many as received Him, He gave them power to be made the sons of God, to them that believe in His name.” Saint John C. I.

POST CHRISTMAS-TIDE CON- SIDERATIONS.

The dear old festival of Christmas has once more passed away. The sighs and prayers, the longings and anticipations of the patriarchs and prophets of the olden days have met with timely fulfillment. The lowly shepherds have heard the heavenly song of the angels, have gone over to Bethlehem to pay their homages to the Child Christ, and have returned to their night watches on the Judæan Hills. The Wise Men of the East who left their country, their homes and their affairs, and journeyed Westward, they knew not whither, led nightly by the luminous star that moved onward in its silent groove, have found at last the dear object of their search; have laid their treasures at the feet of the new born King, and have gone back to their latticed palaces and their royal tents. The Advent versicle, “*Rorate coeli desuper et nubes pluant Justum*”—“Let the heavens distil as the dew, and the clouds rain down the Just One”—will cease awhile to resound through the churches of Christendom, for the stupendous mystery of the Incarnation has been ac-

complished and the "expected of nations" has appeared upon earth. Yet, the gospel of to-day is still replete with sweet visions of the Crib, and holy Church in her offices and prayers will, for some Sundays to come, lovingly linger on the Childhood and Boyhood of Christ, and will continue to hold out to us the great mystery of the Incarnation which that hallowed festival commemorates. This sublime mystery of Christ Incarnate in the flesh, above all other mysteries, merits our most serious thought; challenges our most profound respect and homage; and should be, at this particular season, the main object of our piety and devotion. Therein do we behold displayed, to an amazing degree, the incomprehensible power, wisdom and goodness of God. Therein do we discover a prodigy of omnipotence to excite our astonishment, and a prodigy of love to enkindle in our souls an ardent affection for the Lord of Life and Light. Really, this adorable mystery of the Word made flesh seems almost beyond the powers of speech to express. It lies at the bottom of all science; it is the secret beauty in all art; the completeness of all true philosophy, and the point of arrival and departure of all history. The destinies of nations as well as of individuals group themselves around it. It purifies all happiness, chastens all sorrow; is the cause of all we see and the pledge of all we hope for.

People in the remotest corners of the earth who have never heard of a Cicero, a Napoleon or a Washington, have heard of Christ Incarnate in the flesh. This one event has written its name on every page of history for two thousand years. Back to it humanity looks with most confident hope for relief from its burdens and sighs, and for inspiration in all that is highest and noblest in human endeavor. It is a prodigy which angels and men must be content to admire, without being able to fathom. All mystery, in fact, seems here to attain its absolute climax. That the all-powerful Creator of the universe, the supreme, infinite, self-existing and absolutely independent Master of whatever is or ever shall be, should condescend to clothe Himself with our humanity, is sufficient, and more than sufficient, to feed and hold entranced in ecstatic adoration the flaming intelligence of a seraph during the never-ending ages of eternity. There have been, and, there are yet, men whose aspirations are of so high and holy an order that they feel humbled at the thought of the inferior part of their nature—the burden of the flesh which they are obliged to carry—its low desires and inclinations, its frequent and troublesome necessities. Their spirit almost rebels at the needs of their body, the time that must be devoted to it, and the care that must be expended in supplying its demands for food and clothing, rest and

recreation. Thus, did a Saint Anthony long for a tardier rising of the morning sun that he might prolong his nightly communion with his Maker; thus, have the holy ones of God always felt and, with insatiable desire, have they prayed with the renowned Apostle of the Gentiles to be freed from the body of this death.

Now, if mortals like ourselves feel so keenly the humiliations of our lower nature, who, then, of all created beings, can possibly conceive what an infinite condescension it must have been on the part of the Almighty to descend to our low estate and assume the trappings of our frail humanity. Truthfully and beautifully has the inspired writer expressed it when he says that God annihilated Himself in taking on Himself the form and similitude of a slave—Phil. II—7; for, what, in reality, is the Incarnation of the Son of God but the most astonishing humiliation of the Deity, the annihilation of a God, since there is an immeasurable distance between God Who is an infinite and immense being, and man who is a mere contemptible nothing!

In the other mysteries of human redemption we see nothing, after all, remarkably astounding; that a God made man should embrace poverty, contempt, sufferings and death on a cross was but the consequence, and, as it were, the engagements of the human nature with which He invested Him-

self. But, that a being of infinite majesty, God as He is, should make Himself man; that the eternal Son of the eternal Father should divest Himself, so to phrase it, of the rays of His glory, clothe His omnipotence with our weakness, enclose His immensity in a little body, and be born in time under the veil and figure of a child, under the semblance and similitude of a slave, is something more strikingly wonderful than the creation of the world out of nothing, or balancing the universe on a finger. The Sacred Books speaking of this divine mystery, not only say that the Son of God became man, but make use of an expression which gives us to understand that He chose in man what was most gross and terrestrial. He made Himself like unto us; He espoused our nature; He remained for the space of nine months in the womb of His mother; and, like other children, was He subject to the humiliations, infirmities and sufferings of babyhood and childhood. There is some proportion between man and the smallest insect that creeps upon the earth; but, there never was, there never will be, there never can be, the least proportion between God and man. The whole of this charming and stupendous mystery of Christ Incarnate is so full of wonders that it has wherewith to delight the minds of all mortals, be their station, their disposition, their capabilities what they may. It has as many-sided aspects as there

are individuals to consider it, and it is so infinitely rich in all that is precious in thought and feeling that no two persons can consider it from precisely the same view-point, or even treat it in exactly the same manner. It is the richest mine in the universe; and, what is more, it can never be exhausted. Nor does it belong to one company or corporation, for it is the common property of the human race. Each man may enter on the field of exploration and investigation without fear of encroaching upon the territory of another. It is deep enough, high enough, and long enough to satisfy all. So much, and so very, very much, presents itself before me to be said on this beautiful topic, that I am, in truth, loath to leave off. Our search in this unfailing mine of wealth and beauty would, however, prove almost useless were we to go out of it without striking a vein of practical and profitable utility. Let us, then, advance a little farther. One grand purpose of the Incarnation of Christ was, as we know full well, to unite the creature with the Creator, and to re-unite man with his fellowman. When the World's Redeemer came, the earth was a tomb of selfishness and of fratricide. The widow wept, the poor pined, the sorrowful sighed, and the world mocked their misery and despised their lot; and, as they went down into their graves, they cursed, with dark and bitter curses, the heathen world which had ever

eyed them with looks of scorn. Joy laughed at sorrow, and sorrow heaped imprecations on joy. The voice of the world knew not the tone of kindness, and the eyes of the world had lost the gift of tears. Christ came to restore the severed union, and bind all men together in the bonds of holy love. In the shadow of that manger cradle, the world was first taught the sublime and God-like lesson of unselfishness and devotion. Our enlightened twentieth century boasts of the Brotherhood of Man and makes it even the watchword of its political parties. Had there been no divine Babe in the Manger Crib of Bethlehem, the marble heart of this materialistic and selfish age would never, in its highest aspirations, have dreamed of the doctrine of Christian love. After so many generations of Christian civilization and heroism, pouring the light of their example upon us, how far are we, yet, with all our vaunted progress, from the teaching of Bethlehem. To how many, even among those who glory in their knowledge and belief, can the words of Saint John the Divine meet with fitting application: "He came unto His own and His own received Him not." We look around us in this Christian land and we behold multitudes in the abyss of misery and degradation, and few to help them. We read of the World's Fair City with its one hundred and twenty thousand destitute poor; Boston, the

Athens of America, with its forty thousand, and so on with the rest. We see women struggling for so miserable a pittance that, oftentimes, they stand face to face with the terrible alternative of starvation or death; we see Capital in the luxury of its palaces grinding down the bread-winner as though he were an ignoble slave; we see landlords drawing rent from tenements that would not be fit abodes for savages. And why? Because we have forgotten Bethlehem. The supreme lesson which the Child Christ teaches us on this dear and hallowed feast day is unselfish, personal service for man's elevation and happiness, totally regardless of race, creed or color. A love as wide, as high and as deep as that which shone from out the beaming eyes of the new-born Babe in the cheerless midnight cave. A love which spreads its wings of compassion and mercy on the poor, the sorrow-stricken and the afflicted; a love whose feet are never weary, whose hands are never tired, shedding benediction on the paths of the unhappy.

As Michael Angelo saw in the rough block of marble the angel struggling to be free, so Christian love will see in every child of man, no matter how degraded he may be, the human face divine and will turn his gaze from the dust of earth to the stars of heaven. Fancy this self-denying love the ruling power of the world for a single year! How many ills and heart breaks

would be swept from human life! How many problems solved, before which statesmen faint in despair! Oh, for a world animated with the sweet and abiding spirit of the Babe of Bethlehem; always engaged in thoughtful, generous, helpful acts; every one absorbed in Christlike endeavors! Each man going about doing good; no men leading double lives; no women by their worldliness and pride driving to perdition those to whom they should lend a helping hand; no cruelty to one another; no one to fawn and smile and secretly wound; no harsh judgments, no cutting remarks, no unkind words. No tramp, tramp, tramp of millions to kill one another; no divorce suits, no divided families; no professing christians treating one another like heathens; no hypocrites in the Church, trying to pay Peter by robbing Paul, persistently and defiantly basking in the comfort of privileges that others are paying for; no scandal-mongers; none growing rich at the expense of the welfare of their brethren; all bearing one another's burdens, hiding one another's faults; all living by the sweet law of charity, carrying out the golden rule, "doing unto others as we would that others should do unto us."

All this you will tell me is an idle, impracticable dream. No, it is not. It is a heaven-ordained reality. Christ lived it; died for it; and, on its foundation, built the temple of our Faith.

It is the touchstone of Christianity. The Christian who sneers at it, or who puts obstacles in the way of its realization, is a would-be-destroyer of the Babe of Bethlehem, a traitor to the cause of Christ. Every christian, standing in the shadow of the manger-cradle, is bound in thought and word and deed and prayer, to hasten the dawning of that Christ-day when love shall be crowned queen of the Christian world forever. And, if this be so, what is our manifest duty? Why, to see to it that we make this Christ-like spirit, the universally and permanently abiding spirit of the world. Our ability may be inadequate to the task of everywhere enthroning and endlessly perpetuating this much-to-be-desired condition; but, it is great enough to lend, at least, some help towards these heaven-born ends. Try it. Turn into the ranks of the great Master, Christ Incarnate; follow His leadership, and thus help to hasten the coming of that ever much-to-be-desired and thrice-blessed time when this Christ-like spirit shall reign in every heart through every season and through every day of each and every year.

Original Sin.

From the woman came the beginning of sin, and
through her we all die. Ecclesiasticus—C—XXV.
—V33.

ORIGINAL SIN.

It is difficult, indeed, for us to form an adequate idea of the beauty of the Garden of Eden; but, if it was all that the creations of art and poetry have made it, and we may well suppose it was, it was certainly a most charming abode. In order to arrive at a closer and a more vivid conception of its beauty, and to enable us to understand better and appreciate more fully our subject, suppose we go in spirit through that terrestrial paradise, picture to our mind's eye the delights of that favored spot and judge for ourselves.

Eden was a large and resplendent garden in which the Almighty had poured out with a bountiful hand and in extraordinary profusion the choicest gifts of nature. Rivers, beautiful in their placid flow, irrigated its rich and verdant soil; hills of surpassing loveliness and groves of refreshing coolness, diversified its surface; while the distant mountains, majestic in their towering heights, lent enchantment to the view. Flowers of nameless hues and indescribable sweetness perfumed the soft air; while fruits, innumerable and

luscious, were there to gratify the taste and please the eye. The days were cloudless and fair; the nights, supremely delightful; and time was a continued and uninterrupted succession of peace and happiness and joy. Neither hunger; nor thirst; nor heat; nor cold; nor labor nor fatigue; no fear; no anxiety and no trouble of mind disturbed the unruffled calmness of the privileged inhabitants of those sylvan shades.

Saint Augustine has left us a most touching description of the happy condition of our first parents in the Garden of Paradise. "No evil," he says, "could befall these favorites of the Most High. From within themselves, they had no infirmity, no suffering; from without, no sorrow, no danger. The most perfect health glowed in their bodies; while in their souls reigned a calm repose and undisturbed happiness. No sadness could find its way into the precincts of this garden of bliss. From God, the wealthiest source of all happiness, there flowed into it, in abundant streams, a torrent of uninterrupted enjoyment. All nature was subject to their sway. Without difficulty, without even an effort, they possessed a profound knowledge of things such as is now attained only by the greatest scholars after years of hard and toilsome study. They, in very truth, were the happy monarchs of the earth. Even the angels, those blessed inhabitants of heaven, waited by the order of their

great Creator upon, and went about with them as friends with friends. More than this. The Almighty and All-holy God, recognizing in them an image of His own unequalled holiness, conversed most familiarly and confidentially with them like an affectionate father with his devoted children. And, as a last and crowning blessing, had they remained faithful to the command of their Maker, they would not have been doomed to die, but, by a special grace, the Almighty would have preserved them by the fruit of the Tree of Life in a state of youthful strength; and, later, would have translated them, body and soul, without passing through the pains and terrors of death, into the still more delightful and perfect happiness of heaven."

As one of England's favorite poets longed for a lodge in some vast wilderness where the struggles and cares of life might never reach him more, so are there not times and moments in the lives of every one of us, when the soul oppressed with pain, worn with toil, tired of tumult, sickened at the sight of guilt, trembling in its faith, baffled in its hope, wounded in its love, almost longs for "the wings of a dove" that it "might fly away" and take refuge " 'mid the shady bowers," "the vernal airs," "the roses without thorns," the quiet, the beauty, the loveliness of the Garden of Eden.

Indeed, Paradise and its favored inhabitants are

in such sweet accordance, and together form a scene of such tranquil bliss that, at first, we might almost be led to envy our first parents and regret "man's first transgression and the fruit of that forbidden tree, whose mortal taste brought death into the world and all our woes," did we not know that holy Church sings in her office of Easter Saturday morning: "O happy fault which merited such and so great a Redeemer," and did we not know full well that there is yet a higher happiness than theirs—a happiness won through struggle with inward and outward foes—the happiness and power of moral victory, the happiness of disinterested sacrifice and widespread love—the happiness of boundless hope which the blessed death of Jesus holds out to those who are faithful to the end.

But, why, you ask, was Eden so charmingly lovely? Why did its peaceful, happy days pass so calmly by? Why were those masterpieces of creation so dear to God? Why did He converse so familiarly with them? Why did all created things obey them? I will tell you. Because they were innocent. The history of Paradise Lost and the story of the Fall of the Progenitors of our race are familiar to us all. We learned them in the by-gone days of childhood; in those blissful, happy years when we, too, were innocent,—when our young minds were, as yet, incapable of realizing

the sad and bitter consequences of that which subsequent years have taught us.

Lest in the midst of the delights in which the terrestrial Paradise abounded, our First Parents might unwarily forget their Creator and Benefactor, on Whom they solely depended for the enjoyment of them all, the Almighty restrained them in one particular point and thereby gave them an opportunity of showing at once their obedience and their gratitude. The precept was but one; easy, just and simple. In the middle of the Garden of Eden was planted the "tree of life" and near it grew the "tree of the knowledge of good and evil." "You may eat," said God, "of every tree that grows in Paradise, excepting the tree of the knowledge of good and evil; that tree alone you must not touch; for, if you do, you shall most assuredly die." But there was one, who, having been already ruined by his pride, and whom in punishment an Almighty Power had hurled headlong from the ethereal sky to bottomless perdition, resolved to try his utmost malice against them, and deprive them at once, if he could, both of their innocence and happiness. He was galled with envy to see two creatures whose low beginning was from the slime of the earth, thus blessed and happy in their fidelity to their Maker, while he, an original inhabitant of heaven, was cast down into the lowest disgrace and misery. He, there-

fore, began to execute the ruinous design he had planned against them and undertook to destroy the race of mankind in the very root. Accordingly, he made use of the serpent; and, doubting not that the easiest way to succeed would be to seduce the woman first, he thus addressed her: Why has not God permitted you to eat at will of all the fruits of this garden? He has, replied Eve: "we eat of every fruit in the garden except one, and that one God has forbidden us to touch, lest we die." "Ah, it is not the fear of your dying," answered the serpent, "but the apprehension of your knowing too much, which has induced God to lay such a restraint upon you." "No, ye shall not die." "How could ye?" "By the fruit?" "Why it gives you life and knowledge." "By the threatener?" "Look on me, me who have touched and tasted, yet both live and have even attained a higher lot than fate intended." "Shall that, then, be closed to man which to the beast is open; or, will God incense His ire against you for such a petty trespass?" "Why, then, was this precept given out to awe you? Why but to keep ye low and ignorant? Full well He knows that, in the day ye eat thereof, your eyes which seem so clear yet are but dim, shall be perfectly opened and ye shall be as gods, knowing both good and evil."

Thus spoke the wily serpent; and Eve, instead of turning away her ear as she ought from such

deceitful language, not only listened, but was even pleased with her seducer. She was flattered with his promises; she sucked the poison of his words into her very soul; she looked longingly at the fruit; and, concluding it to be as delicious to the taste as it was pleasing to the eye, she put forth her hand; she took it; she ate of it. Yes, in an evil hour, reaching forth her hand to the forbidden fruit, she plucked it; she ate of it. Earth felt the wound, and nature, sighing through all her works, gave signs of woe that all was lost. Thus was Eve gradually led to transgress the command of her Maker; thus did sin enter into the world. For, no sooner had she eaten of the forbidden fruit than she offered it to her husband who, rather than be the cause of any uneasiness to the spouse he loved, did also eat thereof; and thus, by a sinful compliance, renounced that fidelity which he owed to his Creator. This is the transgression of which death and all the train of human miseries is the fatal consequence. This is the sin too enormous in its guilt for words to express, since in the father it ruined his whole posterity.

With the fall of our First Parents, vanished the pleasing prospect of their happiness. What had hitherto been their joy, began to alarm and terrify them: they heard the voice of God, but it was no longer a voice of gladness, but, rather, a sound of terror in their ears. Trembling with fear, they

fled and hid themselves among the thickest of the trees. Being severely reprimanded for his disobedience, Adam began to exculpate himself upon the weak but cruel pretence that the woman had first offered to him the fruit. The woman, hearing herself thus accused, sought, likewise, to shift the blame from herself and fix it upon the serpent that had deceived her. But, in a formal violation of His precepts, God admits of no such excuses: He cursed the serpent upon the spot as the prime promoter of the sin; condemned him to creep along the earth and to eat the dust thereof all the days of his life; and concluded by pronouncing his disgrace and final overthrow by a woman who, in her seed, should hereafter crush his head. He then addressed Himself to the two other offenders that stood before Him and sentenced them both to the most afflicting penalties which their posterity severely feel to the present day. He told the woman, in particular, that He would multiply her sufferings; that in bringing forth her children she should groan with pain and be forever subject to her husband's power. To Adam He said that, since he had preferred the woman's voice to the voice of God, the earth should, therefore, be cursed; that, notwithstanding his hard labor to render it fertile, it should produce for him briars and thorns; and that in the sweat of his brow he should eat his bread, until he should return to the

dust out of which he had been taken. After this, He clothed them with the skins of beasts; and, to make them still more sensible of their sinful folly, He ironically exclaimed: "Behold, Adam is become like one of us!" By experience he has now the knowledge of good and evil. Never again shall he come near the "tree of life," lest he should be also for eating of its fruit and live forever. The Almighty then drove them out of Paradise; and, at the entrance, placed an angel with a flaming sword to prevent their return. Thus were our unhappy parents compelled to quit that garden of delights; thus were they sent forth to bewail their miseries in a desert land, where they met with nothing but the melancholy marks of their own disobedience.

Adam and Eve going forth from the Garden of Eden, broken down with sorrow, cast, as we may well suppose they did, many a longing, lingering look backward upon those peaceful shades. The recollection of the happiness they had just lost was still fresh in their minds; and, having, now, the experience of evils which, in the state of innocence, they had never known, they must have drawn many and many a bitter comparison between the two extremes.

Adam and Eve going forth from the Garden of Eden, conscious of their wrong doing and their guilt, the first light of natural knowledge not yet

extinguished in them, their notions of good and evil more clear than ours shall ever be, must have been sensibly and inexpressibly affected to see themselves so miserably fallen from their high estate. Surely, their hearts must have been ready to burst with grief at the bitter prospect of so many of their helpless children who were to perish eternally on their account. For, having once consented to the sin, however exemplary their after penance might be, they could not possibly prevent the fatal consequences of it, nor save either themselves or their children. The work of their salvation required the grace and mediation of a God made Man, whose merits should be equally infinite with His mercy. This, Jesus Christ has become for them and for us and has done it in so wonderful and so plentiful a manner that, as was previously remarked, the Church calls the sin of Adam in some sort a necessary sin and a fortunate transgression.

Of the subsequent history of our primeval parents, after paradise was closed against them, we know but very, very little. We may well believe, however, that they passed the remaining days of their earthly career in hard and bitter penance. Scripture closes the narrative of their life-story in the following significant words: And all the days that Adam lived were nine hundred and thirty years and he died.

The sin of our First Parents, as you know, had this peculiarity that it descended, together with all its disastrous consequences, upon their posterity, and it is, as you know, called Original Sin. The doctrine of original sin and the mode of its transmission to us, are mysteries which the Catholic Church believes and teaches on the authority of God Himself Who reveals them. To the mind unenlightened by faith and to those who are unwilling to accept what their finite intellects cannot grasp, this, like all other mysteries, bristles with doubts and difficulties. Yet, it is not by any means out of harmony with reason and, to some extent, admits of explanation.

Almighty God decreed to raise human nature to a supernatural order of love and friendship with Himself, with a right and duty of aspiring to Him as our supernatural end; and, being preserved from death, of finally possessing and enjoying Him forever in heaven. No sooner did Almighty God create Adam than He bestowed upon him, as head of the whole human family, all the supernatural gifts called holiness and original justice to be transmitted, together with human nature itself, to all his children. Unhappily, Adam, by his sin of disobedience, which was also a sin of pride, ambition and disbelief, forfeited, or, more properly speaking, rejected that original justice; and we as members of the human family of which he

was the head, are also implicated in that guilt of self-spoliation, or rejection and deprivation of those supernatural gifts; not, indeed, on account of our having willed it with our personal will, but on account of having willed it with the will of our first parents to whom we are linked by nature as members to their head. Hence, it appears that not the whole sin of Adam is imputed to us; not his pride, not his ambition, not his disbelief, not even his disobedience regarded only as such; in short, not his sin, in so far as it was only personal to Adam; but, we are implicated in that special guilt of his sin in which he could and did act as head of the human family; for, only in that capacity could the guilt of his act be attributed to his posterity and be transmitted with nature itself to every human being descended from him.

Original sin, then, understand, is distinguished from actual, or personal sin, in this: actual or personal sin, is the sin which we personally with our own free will commit; whilst original sin is that which our human nature committed with the will of Adam, in whom all human nature was included, and with whom our human nature is united as a branch to a root, as a child to a parent, as men who partake with Adam the same nature we have derived from him, and as members of the same human family of which Adam was the head. If my hand strike a fellow creature unjustly,

though the hand have no will of its own, yet it is considered guilty, not, as viewed in itself, but inasmuch as it is united to the rest of the body and to the soul, forming one human being, and thus sharing in the will of the soul with which it is connected. In the same manner, the sin committed inwardly by the human will, by vicious thought or foul desire, belongs to the whole human being. The teaching of the Catholic Church, then, with regard to Original Sin is this: Adam by his sin, not only caused harm to himself, but to the whole human race; by it he lost that supernatural justice and holiness which he received gratuitously from God, and lost it, not only for himself, but likewise for all of us; that, having stained himself with the sin of disobedience, he has transmitted, not only death and other bodily pains to the whole human race, but, also, sin which is the death of the soul. Hence, the decree of the Council of Trent confirms the words of Saint Paul: "Wherefore by one man sin entered into this world, and by sin death, and so death passed upon all men, in whom all have sinned."—Romans V—12. And Saint Augustine, commenting upon the words of David, the Royal Prophet; "For behold I was conceived in iniquities and in sins did my mother conceive me," says: "David was not born in adultery, for he was born from Jesse, a just man and his wife." Why, then, does he say that he was conceived in

iniquity, unless, because iniquity is derived from Adam?

As there is hardly a mystery of faith which, at some time or other, has not met with doubt and denial, so, also, has it been with the doctrine of Original sin. In the early part of the fifth century, Pelagius, a native of Britain, and a man of acuteness and subtilty, went to Rome and began a cautious denial of Original sin and the necessity of grace. He drew to himself an able disciple, named Celestius, who contributed, greatly, to the diffusion of his impious tenet. Celestius passed over to Africa and, being bolder and more enterprising than his master, there taught without any reserve or concealment, that the sin of the first man does not in any way affect his descendants; and that man is perfectly able to fulfill the law of God without the aid of grace. Saint Augustine refuted these propositions with admirable learning and skill: he proved from the words of Holy Scripture, and from the sacrament of Baptism, that we are born in sin and that the effects of Adam's transgression are felt by all his descendants; he showed from the prayer our Lord has taught us that we have all need of grace to dispose our wills and to aid them in their labor and conflict. The Pelagian scandal stimulated the zeal of the Bishops of Africa. They assembled a Council; defined, in accordance with the Catholic faith, that the sin

of Adam has been transmitted to his descendants, and forwarded their decrees to Pope Innocent I for confirmation. The Sovereign Pontiff applauded their zeal in maintaining the purity of the faith; solemnly condemned Pelagius, Celestius and their followers; and declared them excommunicated unless they renounced their errors. It was on the occasion of receiving this judgment from the Vicar of Christ that Saint Augustine gave expression to those well known and memorable words: "Roma locuta est, quaestio finita est." "Rome has spoken, the question is at rest."

It is evident, therefore, from the history and condemnation of the Pelagian heresy that the doctrine of Original sin was held and professed by the christians of the early Church; and, in fact, it may be said that this belief is as old as the human race itself; for, traces of this ancient tradition are found among all the nations of the earth, insomuch that, the impious Voltaire was obliged to confess that "The Fall of Man is the base of the theology of all ancient people."

Indeed, with the author of the "Genius of Christianity" we must say that, unless we admit this truth, known by tradition to all nations, we become involved in impenetrable darkness. Without Original sin, how shall we account for the vicious propensity of our nature continually combatted by a secret voice which whispers that we were formed

for virtue? Without a primitive fall, how shall we explain the aptitude of man for affliction—that sweat which fertilizes the rugged soil—the tears, the sorrows, the misfortunes of the righteous; the triumphs, the unpunished success of the wicked? It was because they were unacquainted with this degeneracy, that the philosophers of antiquity fell into such strange errors, and invented the notion of reminiscence.

But, is it not an injustice, an absurdity, to imagine that we should all be punished for the fault of our First Parents? Without undertaking to decide whether the Almighty is right or wrong in making us sureties for one another, all that we know, and all that it is necessary for us to know in our present condition is that such a law exists. After all, do we not daily see the child punished for the wayward parent, and the crime of a villain recoiling upon a virtuous descendant? And, what does this prove, if not the doctrine of Original sin? We know that the innocent son generally suffers the punishment due to the guilty father; that this law is so universally interwoven in the principles of things as to hold good even in the physical order of the universe. When an infant comes into the world, diseased from head to foot from its father's excesses, why do you not complain of the injustice of nature? What has the little innocent done that it should endure the punishment of an-

other's vices? Well, the diseases of the soul are perpetuated like those of the body, and man is punished in his remotest posterity for the fault which introduced into his nature the first leaven of sin.

Besides the guilt of Original sin, which is that habitual state of sinfulness in which we are born—because our human nature is justly considered to have consented in Adam to the rejection of original justice—there is, also, in man the *stain* of Original sin, entailing in the human soul the privation of that supernatural lustre which, had we been born in the state of original justice and holiness, we should have possessed in common with our First Parents. Now, as neither Adam, nor any of his offspring, could repair the evil done by his transgression, we should, in consequence, have always remained in the state of Original sin and degradation in which we were born, and have been forever debarred from the Beatific Vision, had not the Omnipotent, in His infinite goodness and mercy, provided for us a Redeemer. This was the hope that cheered our First Parents in their exile; and this was the promise that heaven held out to the nations through the vicissitudes of four thousand years.

It was a beautiful idea of the poet, Milton, and one in perfect keeping with Catholic theology, to represent the Almighty announcing the Fall to

the astonished heavens and asking if any of the celestial powers was willing to devote himself for the salvation of mankind. The heavenly hierarchy was mute, and, among so many Seraphim, Thrones, Dominations, Angels and Archangels, none had the courage to make so great a sacrifice. What, indeed, could have inspired the angels with that unbounded love for man which the mystery of the cross supposes? How, in truth, could the most exalted of created spirits have possessed strength for the stupendous task? No angelic substance could, from the weakness of its nature, have taken upon itself such sufferings as were heaped upon the head of Christ. If the Son of Man Himself found the cup bitter, how could an angel have raised it to his lips? Oh, no; he never could have drunk it to the dregs, and the sacrifice could not have been consummated.

As man's redemption could have proceeded only from a being superior to himself; and, as this stupendous task could not have been accomplished by any of the intermediate beings between him and God, it follows that we could not have any other Redeemer than one of the Three Persons existing from all eternity; and, among these Three Persons of the Godhead, it is obvious that, the Son alone, from His very nature, was to accomplish the great work of salvation. This Second Adam descended from the skies, and as-

sumed human nature by His birth of Mary. He received life in an abandoned stable, in the lowest of human conditions, because we had fallen through pride. He was born of a Virgin, Immaculate in her Conception, that He might be free from original sin and a victim without spot and without blemish. He passed His life in poverty, sufferings and humiliations; till that, for us thrice-blessed day, when, bowing down His Sacred Head from the hard wood of the Cross, He cried aloud: "Consummatum est"—All is finished"—and He breathed forth His pure soul into the arms of His eternal Father. Here the mystery ends: man feels an awful emotion, and the scene closes.* It is for us to ever humbly adore the Almighty in His wonderful works and to bless Him in His inscrutable and unsearchable ways.

*Viscount de Chateaubriand in *Genius of Christianity*.

The Confessional.

Whose sins you shall forgive they are forgiven them, and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained.—Saint John—C. XX.

THE CONFESSIONAL.

There is, probably, no subject of Catholic belief so vaguely understood, so grossly misrepresented or so frequently and so bitterly attacked by those outside the pale of the Catholic Church as the confessional. With respect to those who are not of the household of the faith, the difficulty regarding this, as well as every other point of Catholic doctrine, arises mainly from a misunderstanding or misconception of the matter. If instead of reading the works of our enemies who are ever ready to misrepresent us and the doctrines of our Holy Church, our adversaries would consult some standard Catholic work, or even take in hand and carefully peruse a Catholic catechism, much that is dark and obscure would become bright and clear and we would be seen in our true colors.

I propose, therefore, to give you a plain and straight-forward exposition of the "Confessional", the grounds on which it rests, the authority on which it is based, the needs of the human heart which it so well and so abundantly supplies, and

the immense benefits it confers, not only on individuals in particular, but on society in general. If you follow me attentively, you will learn to love ever more and more a truth as old as that grand old Church to whose communion you belong. You will be better able to give an account of the faith that is in you; to vindicate it against the attacks of ignorance and prejudice; and, if needs be, to lay down your life's blood in its defence. Baptism, as all who have faith in Christ know and believe, is absolutely necessary for salvation. "Unless a man be born again of water and of the Holy Ghost," says our Blessed Lord, "he cannot enter into the Kingdom of heaven." This life-giving sacrament cleanses the soul, not only from original sin, but also from all actual sin committed prior to its reception, and remits the punishment due to the same. It rescues us from the power of the demon; from children of wrath, makes us Christians, children of God and heirs of heaven, and renders our souls pure and spotless in the sight of the Almighty. Well, indeed, would it be for us all did we never lose sight of those high prerogatives, but carry unsullied to the grave, those noble, royal titles!

Alas! as very few of those once purified in the regenerating and life-giving waters preserve intact their baptismal innocence, if there were not some remedy, the condition of the human race

would be as lamentable as it was before the coming of Christ. Our Blessed Saviour knew full well the frailty of our nature. He remembered that we are dust; and in His infinite goodness and mercy, He left us another sacrament—a second plank after shipwreck—on which we may lay hold and reach the port of safety and salvation. The Holy Fathers, and with them the Council of Trent, employ the illustration of a shipwreck and say that penance is the only plank of safety left us when we have the misfortune of losing the innocence of our Baptism. For example, if you are at sea and the vessel in which you are sailing strikes against a rock and is dashed to pieces—what is your hope of escape? You seize a plank which you see floating on the waves, and you cling to it till help comes to you from some other source. Precisely so is it with the sinner when he has made shipwreck of his baptismal innocence. Hell opens to swallow him, but the mercy of God presents to him the Sacrament of reconciliation as the only means of delivering his soul from the dreadful fate otherwise awaiting him. Our divine Lord frequently spoke to His Apostles during His public life, and more particularly did He treat with them after His glorious resurrection from the dead, of the power which He was to bestow upon His Church and of which the Apostles and their successors, till the consummation of the world,

were to be the ministers. It is evident from the sixteenth and eighteenth chapters of Saint Matthew, that our Blessed Lord fulfilled His promise of giving them the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven, and that He imparted to them an unlimited power to bind and to loose, to forgive and to retain sins with a solemn declaration that whatsoever they would bind or loose on earth, should be bound or loosed in heaven, and that whatsoever sins they would forgive or retain on earth should likewise be forgiven or retained in heaven. We read in the twentieth chapter of the gospel of Saint John, that, on the very day of His resurrection He appeared to His Apostles and showed them His hands and His feet and His side in testimony that He was truly risen from the dead, and said to them: "As the Father hath sent Me so I also send you; and, when He had said this, He breathed on them and said to them 'Receive ye the Holy Ghost whose sins you shall forgive they are forgiven them, and whose sins you shall retain they are retained.' " Can any words be simpler, plainer, more unmistakable or more expressive than these? Turn them as you will, it is utterly, absolutely impossible to take any other meaning from them, or to interpret them in a sense to mean anything else than the divine and wonderful power of forgiving and retaining sins.

Now, no one of sane mind would even for a single instant suppose that our Blessed Savior did not possess of Himself this wonderful and Godlike power of forgiving sins. That He possessed this power and used it is evident from His own emphatic declaration on the occasion of the miracle recorded in the ninth chapter of the gospel of Saint Matthew.—“And behold they brought to Him,” says the Evangelist, “a man sick of the palsy lying in a bed. And Jesus seeing their faith, said to the man sick of the palsy: Be of good heart, Son, thy sins are forgiven thee. And behold some of the Scribes and Pharisees said within themselves: He blasphemeth. And Jesus seeing their thoughts said: Why do you think evil in your hearts? Whether it is easier to say; Thy sins are forgiven thee, or to say, arise and walk? But, that you may know that the Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (then said He to the man sick of the palsy): Arise, take up thy bed and go into Thy House. And he arose and went into his house: And the multitude seeing it, feared and glorified God Who had given such power to men.” If then, no sane person can deny that God Who is omnipotent can forgive sins, must we not also believe and confess that He can likewise delegate this power to others and confer it on whom He pleases. It is evident from His own divine words that He did so; and,

surely, no words can be plainer or more expressive.

Those who cavil over the doctrine of the forgiveness of sins say: O, indeed, we know that Christ Himself could forgive sins and that He likewise could, and even did, confer this same power on His Apostles, but on no others. Was the Church of Christ then, I would ask them, to cease with the death of the Apostles, or was it to continue as He Himself declared till the consummation of the world? Were those saving institutions, those precious channels of God's grace and mercy to benefit only the chosen twelve and those who lived in Apostolic days? Was there to be no salvation for the countless generations that were to live after them? If so, what availeth the infallible words of Christ? "All power is given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go ye, therefore, teach all nations: baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world." Matt. XXVIII—18-20. The Apostles, we know, were not to live always; they in time were to pass away and others were to succeed to their office and ministry. What, therefore, was said to them was evidently intended for their successors to future ages, who were to be endowed with the same unfailing power, handed down in regular succession

in that only saving Church founded by our Blessed Lord Himself, and against which He solemnly declared "the gates of hell shall never prevail."

If, then, the Apostles had the power to forgive sins, their legitimate successors must have it also, for the constitution of the Church has not changed. On our next Inauguration Day, the successful candidate for the Presidency of the United States, the highest office within the power of the people, will have the same prerogatives that the President enjoys at present; and the President has the same now that his predecessors have had, back to the days of the framing of the Constitution of the United States.

Sacramental confession in the tribunal of Penance is a divine institution and a positive injunction of Jesus Christ, Who conferred on His Apostles and their successors the wonderful power of binding and loosing from sin, and Who made it an indispensable obligation for the faithful to submit to this painful and humiliating duty. To pretend to confess to God alone as our adversaries do, and which they maintain is sufficient, is to destroy the commission of Christ, to contradict the gospel and to make void the power of the Keys. Wherefore, Saint Augustine, truthfully and beautifully remarks: "If thou wilt have heaven open to thee, open thy mouth in confession to the priest."

That the Confessional existed from the very time of Christ and the Apostles, is evident from the Fathers and Doctors of the Church in every age and clime. Of what advantage is it, says Saint Bernard, to declare a certain number of your sins and to conceal the remainder? All things are naked and open to the eyes of God, and how dare you conceal anything from him who holds the place of God in so great a sacrament? “*Non salvemini, nisi confiteamini,*” “you will not be saved unless you confess,” writes Hugh of Saint Victor. Saint Anselm who was Archbishop of Canterbury in England in the beginning of the twelfth century declares that “we should go to the priests and beg absolution.” And that distinguished Doctor of the Church, Saint Peter Damian, says that, “To be ashamed of confessing our sins is to fear God less than man.” The Venerable Bede who flourished in England in the beginning of the Eighth Century speaks thus:—“We should distinguish between slight faults and sins of more weight: as to the former, we may usually confess them before our equals in order to obtain their prayers and receive correction; but as for the latter, in order to fulfill the law, we should necessarily confess them to the priest.” Saint Paulinus who likewise lived in the same century says:—“Let each one prove himself before receiving the body and blood of Jesus Christ.

Before approaching, let us have recourse, as is our duty, to confession and penance; let us examine with care all our works; and, if we remark in ourselves whatever is capable of causing us to abstain from receiving, let us hasten to remove it by confession and true penance, for fear that, like Judas the traitor, harboring the devil within us, we may perish." A council held in Kent in England in the year seven hundred and eighty-seven forbade prayers to be said for those who through their own fault, died without confessing their sins. Saint Viron was confessor to Pepin, King of France; Saint Martin, to the great Charles Martel; Saint Udalric, Bishop of Augsburg, to the Emperor Otho of Germany, and Saint Arteldulf, prior of Saint Oswald, to King Henry the First, in the olden time when England was a Catholic country. William of Somerset, a Monk of Malmesbury, praises the Norman soldiers for having spent the night before battle in confessing their sins. Alcuin, the preceptor of the Emperor, Charlemagne, wrote a work against the heretics of his time who denied the necessity of confession, while that same great Emperor, Charlemagne himself, made it a rule that every regiment in his army should have its father confessor. It is related in the life of Saint Ambrose who was Archbishop of Milan in Italy in the Fourth century that, when he heard the confessions of his

penitents, he wept so much over the recital of their sins as to cause them to weep; and Saint Augustine who was such an ardent admirer of the fervid eloquence of the same Saint Ambrose, and to whom, in a great measure, he attributes his conversion to the faith, says in one of his homilies: "Let no one say I do penance in private and before God. God Who pardons me knows the sorrow of my heart—Was it, therefore, said in vain; "Whatsoever ye shall bind upon earth shall be bound also in heaven? Were the Keys given in vain to the Church of God? Shall we render fruitless the gospel of God and the words of Christ?"

"God granted unto the priests of the New Law," writes Saint John Chrysostom in his learned work on the Priesthood, "what never was granted to angels or archangels, for never was it said to them, "Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound also in heaven.—"

Tertullian, a priest of Carthage in Africa, who lived in the age following that of the Apostles, says in his admirable work on Penance:—"I think many decline confessing their sins, or delay it from day to-day, moved more by fear of shame than care of their salvation; like unto those who afflicted with secret disorders, conceal their malady from the physicians, and perish from false modesty and bashfulness. What advantage can be derived from the hiding of our crime; for,

if we succeed in having it escape the knowledge of men, can we conceal it from God?" Origen, a prominent Apologist of the early Church and a prodigy of learning who died in the year two hundred and fifty-four declares; "If we are sorry for our sins, and if we confess them not only to God, but also to those who have a remedy for them, then shall they be forgiven us." In the First Century of the Church, Saint Clement, the disciple and successor of Saint Peter, the first Pope and Bishop of Rome, says: "Saint Peter taught that we must reveal even bad thoughts to the priests."

Here, then, I have brought you down the centuries till we stand on the very threshold of the Apostles, and we are told that we must confess even sins of thought to a priest. By whom are we told this? By a disciple of Saint Peter. Wherefore, if this doctrine be not true we must come to one of two conclusions. Either that Saint Peter was a poor instructor, or that Saint Clement paid no attention to the instructions given. Now, is it reasonable to suppose that the Church at so early a period, when the words of the Apostles were still fresh in the minds of the people, could teach false doctrines? If so, vain must be the words of the Savior: "And I say to thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not

prevail against it. And I will give to thee the Keys of the Kingdom of heaven. And whatsoever thou shalt bind upon earth, it shall be bound also in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose upon earth, it shall be loosed also in heaven.”—Saint Matthew XVI—18-19.

It is evident, therefore, from the concurring testimonies of the Fathers and Doctors of the Church that the words of our Blessed Redeemer were accepted in their true, natural and obvious sense by His Apostles and their successors, and that sacramental confession has been practiced by the faithful in all ages of the world since the establishment of Christianity.

But if, as the enemies of the Catholic Church maintain, confession is not a divine, but a human institution, when, where, and by whom I would ask them was it invented? It is obvious from the testimonies which I have quoted for you, and which are only a few of the many with which history abounds, that, in every age, from the day-dawn of Christianity, down to the present enlightened period of the world's history, the same unchanging belief as to the divine origin of this sacrament was universally maintained among the faithful. Surely, if sacramental confession be the work of man the date and circumstances of its institution must be recorded somewhere on the annals of the past. Such an invention, did

it ever occur, would be too important not to leave some trace behind it of the time in which it was supposed to have taken place; but no such trace is anywhere to be found. What class of persons, moreover, could possibly have any interest in the establishment of such an institution as the confessional? If it had been invented by the priests, the bishops, or the popes, they, very likely, would have contrived in some way or other to exempt themselves from submitting to the trying and painful ordeal of confessing their own sins. But now all know that priests, and bishops, and archbishops, and cardinals and the popes themselves, must all submit to the same law of confessing their sins like the humblest and lowliest Catholic christian. The only difference is that, as their calling is far more exalted and holy than that of the ordinary Christian, they approach the sacred tribunal more frequently than the members of the laity in order that they may discharge with greater purity the sublime functions of their sacred office. We read of Saint Ignatius of Loyola, the distinguished founder of the Jesuits, of Saint Charles Borromeo, Archbishop of Milan, and of that model of meekness and amiability, Saint Francis de Sales, the gentle Bishop of Geneva, in Switzerland, and many others, that they confessed every morning, believing as they

did to find in this salutary practice a most powerful aid in controlling themselves and advancing in virtue.

Furthermore, how could any one attribute the invention of confession to ecclesiastical authorities when, besides being obliged to submit to the onerous duty of confessing their own sins, the hearing of the confessions of others, especially in large parishes, is one of the hardest and most difficult duties imposed upon the Priesthood of Jesus Christ. To sit for long hours in the confessional, listening to tales of misery and woe, surrounded by the foul air of its usually narrow limits, oftentimes inhaling tainted breaths and sickening odors is, I assure you, anything but a pleasant task. Yet, say the ignorant and malicious, they get paid for it. Never was there a blacker calumny charged against the Church of God by her enemies. Search history through and through and we defy them to produce a single instance when at any period in the long annals of the Catholic Church it was ever lawful for her ministers to accept any money whatsoever for the hearing of confessions or the granting of absolution. I never heard of such a thing, nor did you either. Such a proceeding would be justly considered one of the most heinous crimes and sacrileges that could be committed and would be visited by the severest chastisements

which the Church could inflict. Again, suppose that at any given period in the history of the Church the ecclesiastical authorities took it upon themselves to establish the confessional, it is not at all likely that that great body of the faithful would have willingly submitted to so painful and so humiliating an ordinance. The Christians of the first centuries and of the middle ages had the very same passions to master; some would have wrangled with law and authority then as much as others do now; would have been just as rebellious under what they fancied an ecclesiastical innovation, as some twentieth century Christians are about paying their pew rent and supporting the Church and their pastor. Hence, they would never have submitted to the yoke of the confessional, were they not firmly convinced that it was established by Christ Himself. I know, and I am confidently assured, that not so much as the faintest shadow of a doubt has ever yet crossed your mind, or my mind either, concerning the divine origin of confession, and I cannot but feel convinced that all that I might say to you on such an almost exhaustless subject can do other than enhance your admiration and strengthen your love for this wonderful manifestation of God's goodness and mercy. "That Church," declared Lactantius, "is to be known as the true Church in which are to be found confession and penance."

In fact, a Church without the confessional is like an hospital without doctors. And why? The physicians are the preservers and executors of all that vast store of knowledge which has come down to us from the days of Hippocrates, the Father of medicine. The medical text books used in, and the lectures delivered at, our medical schools are the results of numberless observations and confidences reposed in countless doctors from the earliest times. That medical men may dishonorably abuse this confidence to their own advantage or the injury of their patient, is of course, possible with free agents; but this does not militate against the justness and general necessity of the whole medical profession. As well would it be to do away with remedies altogether because some of them can be used to shorten and destroy life. The medical profession has its own preservative etiquette, and provides against dishonorable conduct by rules, regulations, oaths and laws enacted in the various medical Societies, Colleges and Universities.

Before the physician can effectually apply a remedy, the patient must state his case for his individual benefit. Such a case becomes a part of the sum of the doctor's experience from which other patients in turn derive profit. This experience passes into the hands of the professions at large through discussions, lectures and text books

where it is thoroughly sifted, and, if found worthy of permanent record, is preserved for the advantage of suffering humanity. Now the philosophy involved in medical cases, holds good, but in a more exalted degree, of the system of the confessional. What diagnosis is to the medical profession, casuistry, or the science of solving the right and wrong of given cases, is to the Catholic clergy. Works of moral theology are the text books of spiritual medicine which the confessor uses, together with his own experience when administering the sacrament of penance.

What a profound knowledge of the human heart the Catholic priesthood must possess from this continuous out-pouring of its inmost depths! For long centuries, the Catholic Church has been accumulating in this way a knowledge of the ways of evil, a knowledge which, separated from individual cases and circumstances, is ever being more perfectly systematized by her writers on moral theology. Doctor Talmage, the once well known Baptist preacher of Brooklyn, felt the need of knowing the sins of his people when he spent the nights of a week in visiting the haunts of crime in New York City and published the experiences of these nights in a series of lectures. The Catholic Church does not publish her experience in the vulgar tongue lest harm might be done; yet the circle of her experience is ever

widening, and in the confessional she is not only gaining a knowledge of all sin but of new sins. Very different, however, is the knowledge of sin possessed by the confessor from that of the lawyer, the physician or minister who goes slumming. The priest in the confessional sees the penitent bowed down with grief; the lawyer, the jurist or the physician, sees brother contending against brother; man leagued against his fellow man; the felonious, the envious and the depraved, wedded to their crimes, until, sickened by the continuous sight of wretchedness and sin, they despair of human nature, lose faith in God, in religion and in everything else. The confessor, on the contrary, sees the workings of grace, of conscience and of that unvariable belief in God, and the great hereafter; he sees the struggle that man makes to be good even when he falls, and that how truly the good shepherd still goes in search of the wandering sheep. Thus, while the professional man loses faith, the confessor is edified and strengthened and convinced ever more and more that God still guards and guides the world.

Here I might be permitted to mention a personal instance that brought these truths very strikingly to my mind. In the early afternoon of a dark day in the moody October in the first years of my ministry, as I lounged restlessly at my study table, wandering mentally in the valley of

indecision, and realizing from the gloominess without and the dullness within, the fitting import of Longfellow's truthful line:

Into each life some rain must fall
Some days must be dark and dreary,

I was suddenly aroused from my reverie by an unusually sharp ring of the door bell. I answered the call without delay; and, on opening the door, was confronted by a dark-visaged, hard-featured young man, who said that he wished to go to confession. Somewhat nonplused by this rather uncommon request at so unusual an hour; and, recollecting a recent experience that might have resulted unpleasantly from acquiescence to a similar demand, I very gently informed my visitor that confessions were heard in the church every morning before mass and that I would there await his pleasure on the morrow. "Well, then," said he, "I suppose it is all up with me again;" and, without further remark or ceremony, he went his way. He had been gone but a very few minutes, when I began to reflect how very imprudent, nay, dangerous it was, to refuse to hear a confession. With a qualm of conscience, I resolved to go forth in search of this wandering sheep. I went by rather a circuitous route in my quest of him, scrutinizingly eyed every place that might possibly hide him from my view, and hopefully enquired of several, under whose observation he might,

perchance, have come, if they had seen my man. But, nowhere was he to be found, nor had any one seen him.

“Like ships that sailed for sunny isles
But never came to shore.”

Vanished my hopes of recalling this lost opportunity; or, of ever again, encountering the object of my search, when, lo! just as I was traversing the last block homeward, our paths suddenly crossed and face to face we met. “I see you have not gone away, yet,” I said; “so, if you will return with me, I shall be pleased to hear your confession.” Right gladly, indeed, did he accept my invitation; and, with profound humility and heartfelt sorrow, did he rehearse to me the story of his life. His, to be sure, was a tale of woe; and, many a sigh mingled with his tears as he paused in the history of his waywardness to dry his eyes with his faded bandana. I minded him to be of good cheer; comforted him as best I could; and held out to him the promise and rewards that await the penitent soul. As he passed out into the still impending gloom, he confidently assured me that, not since the days of his innocent childhood, had he experienced such calm content; that a burden indescribable had been lifted from his soul; and that he hoped, now, to go forth a new man and to walk ever after in the paths of righteousness and peace.

One thought, however, still lingered over all, to haunt his future as it had shadowed his past,—the thought that he had, somewhere, in the wide world, a poor old mother whose wise counsels he had defied, but whose prayers, like some guardian spirit, had, he believed, been ever with him. Many are they that have knelt at my feet in the years of my Priesthood; but, among them all, stands out pre-eminent the memory of a dark-visaged stranger that on a dull October day stopped at my door to have a sorrow lifted from his life and to add a joy to my own. For, while we priests are bidden to forget the sins of those who come to us, the sinner himself we may think of in pity and in love. The Confessional is not the horrid thing that bigotry and prejudice would have it. It is not a mere sentiment, or an idle freak of fancy, but a great, a living reality. Believe me, no one goes to confession for mere pleasure, but because he is moved thereto by the gentle whispers of divine grace. The sinner better and more perfectly realizes the great evil of sin by the difficulty and repugnance he feels in confessing it. By such a course he is advised in what way he may best avoid relapse and, thereby, is he also made to repair the wrong he has done.

If we view the confessional altogether apart from the light that faith throws around it, must it not bring us nearer to God, since it makes us

explicitly acknowledge our faults, heartily repent of them and firmly purpose their amendment. Indeed, all men, not excepting philosophers themselves, whatever may have been their opinions on other subjects, have considered the confessional one of the strongest barriers against vice and as a master-piece of wisdom.

A prominent army officer was once asked to state from what nationality he would select his men for a critical encounter, had he the choice of nations. After a moment's hesitation he spoke of the training of one, the intrepid daring of a second; the cool determination of some, the matchless endurance of others, and so on; "But, gentlemen," he continued, "aside from the question of nationality, let me tell you that, for men who know no fear—who could be depended upon to a man, although it were a case of almost certain annihilation,—give me a regiment that had just knelt and told their sins to their chaplain, or who had received at his hands what they call a general pardon. I belong to no church," he said in conclusion; "I never expect to; but I say without hesitation that I would stake my life on the absolute fearlessness of these men, who believe so firmly that, whatever the result, they are prepared to meet their God."

The confessional is without doubt the great guardian of the morals of the youth of both sexes.

Through it, rising passions are checked or kept under control and vice is nipped in the bud. Innocence is preserved from many fatal snares; or, if it has been unfortunately lost, the penitent is saved from despair and headlong ruin and is once more restored to the grace and friendship of the Almighty. The young man is warned on the very threshold of life; the young woman is rescued from the proximate occasion of sin; and the dangers of a wicked course are pointed out to all. It is very evident that preaching from the altar or pulpit has not the same powerful effect as the word fitly spoken and whispered into the ear of the individual penitent by the minister of God in the sacred tribunal of penance. The Confessional is the place for special warnings and instructions adapted to the widely different wants, dangers and necessities of the penitents. There it is that the means are pointed out and the remedies prescribed for the prevention or cure of the diseases of the soul. Hence, the penitent Emperor Theodosius said wisely to Saint Ambrose: "'Tis thine to prescribe and compound the medicines; 'tis mine to receive them.'" "This whole institution," says the eminent Protestant writer Leibnitz, "is worthy of divine wisdom, and if in the Christian religion there be any ordinance singularly excellent and worthy of admiration, it is this, which even the Chinese and Japanese admired; for the

necessity of confessing at once deters many, especially those who are not yet obdurate, from sinning and administers great comfort to the fallen; insomuch that I believe a pious, grave and prudent confessor to be a powerful instrument in the hands of God for the salvation of souls."

"How many restitutions and reparations," to quote the infidel Rousseau, "does not confession produce among Catholics." And even the impious Voltaire, whose wicked tenets still find followers, declares that "confession is a most excellent expedient, a bridle to guilt, invented in the remotest antiquity and practiced at the celebration of all the ancient mysteries."

Steeped in iniquity and crime as the world is to-day, ever, apparently, growing worse rather than better, what, in fact, would it be deprived of the confessional's potent influence! What would become of the more than two hundred millions of Catholics throughout the world who acknowledge it as a divine invention and bow down in sweet humility before the dispenser of so great a mystery! Without this saving institution the sinner would sink into despair. To what bosom could he unburden his heart? To a friend?

"Alas! friendship is but a name,
A charm that lulls to sleep;
A shade that follows wealth or fame,
But leaves the wretch to weep."

My remarks would still remain incomplete were I to conclude without touching on the secrecy of the confessional which, as you know full well, must before all other considerations, stand paramount and supreme. So indispensable, in fact, is this law of secrecy, so far reaching is it in extent, and so strictly bound is the priest to be upon his guard in this particular that he can in all truth say with an ancient writer: "What I know by confession I know less than what I do not know at all."

Professional men, lawyers, physicians, all, as a rule, keep professional secrets; occasionally, however, we hear in the courts or through the newspapers of the betrayal of their secret trust. But surprising as it may seem, there is not a single case on record since the day dawn of Christianity of a Catholic priest revealing the secrets of the confessional. Indeed, it would be difficult for a priest to divulge individual faults committed to his hearing, even if he would, for memory entirely fails him. In most cases circumstances, doubtless, contribute to this condition. The confessional is usually a plain wooden structure, divided into three compartments, the middle being occupied by the Father confessor, and the other two by his penitents. The only means of communication is through a close wire or wooden grating; and, as there is no obligation that the penitent need in

any way reveal his identity to the confessor, and as it is ordinarily dark in this tribunal he has no other way to recognize individuals than by their voices. As the circle which arises on the water by the action of the pebble cast upon its surface, gradually expands till finally it disappears and is lost on the bosom of the deep, so the short-comings and sins breathed into the ear of the priest in the sacred tribunal ruffle his mind as they cross it, pass out of his memory and are buried in the grave of oblivion forever.—Granting, as we necessarily must, human liberty in all Catholic clergymen; nay, even admitting an occasional fall like that of the unfortunate Martin Luther, Pere Hyacinth of unsavory fame, and others, are we not withal perforce obliged to confess that there is a special and miraculous Providence over the secrets of the confessional that has kept us safe for nineteen centuries.

Not so very many years ago a French priest of the diocese of Aix in France, returned home from New Caledonia, where he had been a convict for more than two years on a false charge of robbery and murder. Shortly after the priest's release the real murderer appeared and declared to the authorities that he committed the murder and so concealed the body that suspicion was thrown on the priest. More than this, the murderer avowed that he confessed the crime to the

priest who could, by being false to his duty as a confessor, have saved himself the peril of a disgraceful death or a life long imprisonment.

When Archbishop McEvilly of Tuam was a young priest in Ireland a gold watch was given to him in the confessional to be returned to a certain Protestant gentleman from whom it had been stolen. On his returning the watch the owner insisted on his knowing the name of the person who stole it; and, on his refusal to reveal it, the priest was sentenced to a term of imprisonment for two years. He was finally released; and, ever since, the judges in the Irish courts have respected and tacitly permitted, the secrecy of the confessional.

I shall close by narrating one more instance, a well known historical fact, recorded in the life of Saint John Nepomucen, and which again beautifully but sadly illustrates the secrecy of the confessional. Saint John Nepomucen was born of poor but pious parents in the little town of Nepomuc in Bohemia about the year thirteen hundred and thirty. Both in childhood and in youth he gave promise of his future greatness by his advancement in piety and learning, and, in due time, he was elevated to the sublime dignity of the Priesthood. His holy life as a priest led to his appointment as chaplain to the Court of the Emperor Wenceslaus where he converted

numbers by his preaching and example. Amongst those who sought his advice was the Empress, a most virtuous and accomplished lady, who suffered much on account of her husband's unfounded jealousy. Her profound piety only incensed the Emperor still more and he tried by every means in his power to extort from Saint John what she had disclosed to him in her confessions. As all his efforts were ineffectual the tyrant Emperor at length commanded him to be thrown into a dungeon where he lay several days rejoicing in his chains. After a time, he was released and invited to the royal palace, treated with the greatest courtesy and with every exterior mark of kindness and esteem, and even promised honors and riches if he would only lay open the confessions of the Empress. But as Saint John could neither be induced by blandishments nor threats to yield, the tyrant Emperor commanded him to be again cast into prison; placed on a rack, burning torches applied to his sides and to the most sensitive parts of his body; but no words save Jesus and Mary passed his lips. Finally, on the eve of the glorious festival of our Blessed Lord's Ascension into Heaven, after a last and fruitless attempt to move his constancy, the wicked Emperor ordered the servant of God to be bound hand and foot and cast into the river. As his body sank beneath the surface of the waves, a heavenly light,

shining on the waters, discovered the body which was buried with all the honors due to a saint. Three hundred and thirty years after the death of Saint John, when the shrine wherein reposed his sacred remains was opened, his tongue alone was found fresh and free from corruption, as if the Saint had but just expired. Thus did the Almighty reward, even in death Saint John Nepomucen, who perished a martyr to the secret of the Confessional.

Indulgences.

In this present time, let your abundance supply their want, that their abundance may also supply your want, that there may be an equality.—

II Cor. VIII-14.

INDULGENCES.

The subject of this Sermon-Essay is one, concerning which, those who are not of the household of the faith, entertain very vague, and, oftentimes, outlandish notions; and about which, I venture to say, even many devout, and otherwise well instructed Catholics, manifest little appreciation; for the reason, most likely, that their knowledge of the teachings of the Church, regarding the nature and use of Indulgences, is so very imperfect. It shall be my aim, then, to elucidate for you, this frequently misunderstood and, often, misrepresented doctrine of our Holy Church; I shall endeavor to sustain your interest in the subject, by allusion to the well-known facts of History which have a bearing on this subject, especially the building of Saint Peter's Church at Rome, the largest and most costly church in the world; and the rise of the so-called Reformation.

And first, let us begin with the word itself. Our English word "Indulgence" comes from the Latin word "indulgere" and signifies, generally, to be indulgent to, to treat with kindness, to be lenient

and gentle with, and so on. Thus, the executive that liberates the criminal, or commutes the sentence of the condemned; the landlord who, instead of exacting the very last penny from his tenant, or demands payment the very day or hour the rent falls due, grants to the tenant some days of needed grace, or, in seasons of scarcity and failure, remits a good part of the debt; all exercise acts of indulgence. So, too, we speak of an over-indulgent father; a too indulgent mother, and the rest. Now, in a theological sense, also, the term Indulgence signifies an act of clemency and mercy, a remission and condonation granted by the Church. And hence to obtain a clear idea and correct knowledge of the precise nature of this act of clemency and mercy, remission and condonation, we must always keep well in mind certain defined truths which are articles of faith in the Catholic Church.

When the famous Roman orator, Cicero, wished to engage the special attention of his hearers, he was accustomed to say to them: "lend me your ears." We find this expression recurring constantly in his orations. Cicero did not mean, of course, that they were to cut off their ears and hand them to him; he wished, merely, to arouse the lagging attention of some among his hearers, and to request from all the closest application of their minds to something particularly important

that he was about to say to them. At the outset, then, I shall borrow Cicero's expression, and I say to you that, if you wish to understand, clearly and thoroughly, the doctrine of the Catholic Church on this frequently misunderstood subject of Indulgences, you will have to lend me your ears, or, to be plain about it, you will have to give me your very closest attention.

In all sin, whether mortal or venial, we must distinguish two things, the guilt and the punishment. The guilt, or the offence, is the injury done to God by sin; the penalty, or punishment, is the chastisement which the Almighty has a right to inflict on the sinner, even after the sin has been pardoned. When the sin is mortal, the offense, we know, is grievous; and, consequently, the bond that unites us to our Maker is severed, sanctifying grace, which is the life and beauty of the soul, is lost, and the penalty incurred is everlasting punishment to be undergone in hell. But, if the sin be only venial, the friendship of God is not destroyed, nor does the soul merit eternal torments.

Now, the only way to recover God's friendship, after having fallen into mortal sin, is through the sacrament of Penance worthily received, or, through perfect contrition, with a desire of the sacrament when it is impossible to receive the sacrament. In each case, the sin and the eternal

punishment due to it are remitted. This is the first truth, then, that we must bear well in mind.

Some times God's grace acts so powerfully on the soul, that, in receiving sacramental absolution, or eliciting an act of perfect contrition, the sinner may have such a full and intense sorrow for his sin that the Almighty remits all the punishment due to it, as is the case in Baptism and Martyrdom. But, as sorrow and love are rarely so perfect as to entirely justify the sinner, the Almighty requires a temporal punishment to satisfy His divine Justice after the guilt and the eternal punishment have been remitted. Many instances, recorded in Holy Writ, clearly demonstrate this truth. We read in the twelfth chapter of the Book of Numbers that Mary, the sister of Moses, was subjected to a seven days penance, though her sin had been forgiven. In like manner, the Israelites were pardoned their sins through the intercession of Moses; and yet, in punishment of their idolatry and murmurs, they were condemned to wander forty years in the desert and were debarred from entering the Land of Promise. (Numbers C. XIV.) King David was assured by the prophet Nathan, that the Lord had taken away his sin; yet he was punished with the death of his child, the dishonor of his house, dissensions in his family and several other judgments that were inflicted on him. A sin of pride which he afterwards committed was

pardoned; yet was punished with a plague of three days which carried off seventy thousand of his subjects.—II Kings—C. XXIV.

Here we plainly see the pardon of sin, separated from the pardon of the punishment, and the justice of God reserving the right to inflict a temporal chastisement on those who have transgressed His sacred laws. “Thou dost not leave unpunished” exclaims the penitent Saint Augustine, “the sins of even those to whom Thou grantest pardon.” Hence the teaching of the Church: “If any one saith that, after the grace of justification has been received, to every penitent sinner sin is so remitted and the guilt of eternal punishment is blotted out in such a wise, that there remains not any of temporal punishment to be discharged, either in this world, or in the next, in Purgatory, before the entrance to the kingdom of heaven can be opened (to him), let him be anathema.”

This temporal punishment due to sin must be undergone in this life by works of penance, or in the future life by the pains of Purgatory. If you keep these truths well in mind, you will have no difficulty in arriving at a correct idea of Indulgences; and, to enable you the better to do so, let each one apply them in his own particular case. Suppose you have committed sin: if mortal, the injury done to God is grievous; and, consequently, you have lost sanctifying grace and merited eter-

nal punishment. If venial, the friendship of God is not lost, but only weakened, and you have incurred but a temporal punishment. In the supposition that the sin you have committed is mortal, the sacrament of Penance worthily received, or an act of perfect contrition when it is impossible to receive the sacrament, reconciles you with God, and remits the eternal punishment that such sin has merited. But even after your sin has been forgiven and the eternal punishment due to it, forever wiped away in the sacred tribunal of Penance the Almighty exacts of you a temporal fine and this fine you must pay either in this life by means of works of penance, or hereafter by the pains of Purgatory. Now, this debt of temporal punishment that remains to be paid, after the guilt and the eternal punishment due to our sins have been forgiven, the Almighty graciously remits by means of Indulgences.

We now come to the definition of an Indulgence: An Indulgence is the remission of the temporal punishment for which the sinner remains indebted to the Divine Justice on account of sins already pardoned as to their guilt and eternal punishment. When the whole of the temporal punishment due to sin is remitted, the indulgence is called Plenary; when only a part is remitted, it is called Partial. This remission is effected by means of the application of the merits of Jesus Christ and the more

than abundant satisfactions of the Most Blessed Virgin and the Saints, which merits and satisfactions constitute what is called the Spiritual Treasury of the Church. And here to clarify our ideas on this point, it might be well to say a word on the Communion of Saints. You know that all the members of the one true Church constitute three great branches: the Church Militant, or those who are still on earth battling and struggling to save their souls; the Church Suffering, or those in Purgatory, who are being purged from their sins and purified for heaven; and the Church Triumphant, or those who "have fought the good fight" and are now enjoying the reward of their labors and conquests. The Communion of Saints means, then, that these three branches of the Church aid one another. Thus, we on earth help the Souls in Purgatory by our prayers and good works, and they, in turn, pray for us; while the saints in Heaven pray for both us and the Souls in Purgatory. How beautiful is not this Communion of Saints—this common union—this Godlike unity exhibited and reproduced in the Catholic Church and which is to be found in her and by her alone. Well, indeed, did the immortal Bossuet, the silver-tongued orator of France, exclaim in his discourse on the Unity of the Church: "O Holy Church of Rome, Mistress of churches and Mother of all the Faithful! O Church, selected by God for the

union of His children in the same faith and charity! To thy unity shall we always cling with all the earnestness of our heart. If I forget thee, O Church of Rome, may I forget myself; may my tongue become parched and remain immovable in my mouth, if thou be not ever foremost in my memory, if I give thee not first place in all my canticles of joy.”

But the Communion of Saints has a wider meaning than this, as an illustration will very plainly show you. Suppose the case of a family living together and consisting of a mother and three sons. The eldest son earns a very large salary, the second sufficient to support himself, while the youngest son, earns but very little. Like good and dutiful sons they give their earnings to their mother, who, from the combined amounts provides for the wants of all; and draws from the large salary of the eldest, to supply the needs of the youngest. Thus, he who has not enough for his support is, through his mother, aided by the one who has more than he needs. Now, the Church is our mother; and, some of her children, like the Most Blessed Virgin and the great Saints accumulated many good works and did far more than was necessary to gain heaven; while others did not do enough. Then our Mother, the Church, draws from the abundant satisfaction of her rich children to help those who are poorer in merits and good

works. The greatest and largest treasure the Church has to draw from in this collection, is the more than abundant merits of our Blessed Lord from Whom one single sigh, one solitary tear, one drop of Whose all-precious blood, would have been more than sufficient to redeem countless worlds; the superabundant satisfaction of His Blessed Mother who, though sinless; performed countless penances and good works; and the penances and good works of the saints.*

You understand, then, what is meant by the Communion of Saints and what constitutes the Spiritual Treasury of the Church. This grand and opulent Treasury those empowered unlock, and from it they dispense favors by way of Indulgences, to us, their needy children. Bear well in mind that, an indulgence remits neither mortal nor venial sin; that it does not wipe out the eternal chastisement; nor bring about, nor affect justification, but rather presupposes and follows it. It is absolutely necessary that we should have a clear knowledge of these truths; for, we find nothing so continually and so persistently maintained among Non-Catholics, and even stated in their books, than that an Indulgence is a permission to commit sin. You know, of course, that nothing is more radically wrong and absurd. You know,

*Explanation of the Baltimore Catechism. Kinkead.

moreover, that, in the early days of the Church, the penances were much more severe, both in intensity and duration, than they are at present. For example: under the old Canonical penances one who had cursed his parents, was obliged to fast for forty days on bread and water; an usurer, three years on the same diet; while an adulterer had to perform public penance from five to twelve years, according to circumstances, and so on. Of course these penances were different in different parts of the Church and at different periods; and, as time went on and faith grew weaker, and piety relaxed among the faithful, it was found impossible to get these severe penances performed; and so it became evident that, if it were still insisted on, the effect would be to prevent repentance, rather than to insure its being thorough and sincere; and, therefore, the Church, wishing to save her children, made it easier for them to do penance; and this substitution of the easier for the more difficult, was known as an Indulgence.

Now, you sometimes notice printed after a little prayer or some devotion, “an indulgence of forty days; of one hundred days; of three years” and the like for saying the prayer or performing that a devotion. What does this mean? Does it mean that a person who says that prayer or performs this devotion will be released from Purgatory

forty days, or one hundred days, or three years sooner than if he did not say that prayer or perform that devotion? Not at all. We have said that the early Christians were obliged to perform very severe public penances; that sometimes this public penance lasted for forty days; one hundred days; three years; and even for a much longer period. By an indulgence, then, of forty days; one hundred days; three years, etc., the Church grants the remission of as much of the temporal punishment as the early Christians would have received for doing forty days, one hundred days, three years, etc., of public penance. Just how much of the temporal punishment Almighty God blotted out for forty days, etc., of public penance, we do not know. But, whatever it was, God blots out just the same now for one who gains an indulgence of forty days, one hundred days, etc., by saying a little prayer, or performing the devotion to which the indulgence is attached. "As the old Canonical penances were regarded as more salutary than anything one could do of one's own accord, so the prayers and good works which the church has substituted for them have a like value. In theory, a prayer or good work to which an indulgence of forty, or one hundred days, is attached is the equivalent of the old penances performed for that time; but, as the actual benefit derived from this indulgenced prayer, or good work, de-

pende mainly on the fervor with which it is said or done, it is plain that the actual benefit of an indulgence is likely to be less than that of the old penance; for the performance of the Canonical penance required of itself a great amount of fervor; while to perform the work to which the indulgence is attached requires but very little. All good Catholics recognize this; and, as a consequence, most of them, instead of being contented with one plenary indulgence, or a few partial ones, endeavor to gain as many as they possibly can.”—*Plain Facts For Fair Minds.*

“For those who seek God’s love and the glory of heaven,” says Saint Ignatius of Loyola, “indulgences are a rich treasure, and may be compared to so many precious gems.” And Saint Alphonsus assures us that, to become saints we have only to gain as many indulgences as possible. The fruits to be derived from the use of Indulgences so abundantly placed by the Church at the disposal of the Faithful, are, by too many, not sufficiently estimated. When too late, thousands will have to deplore the fatuity with which they neglected to avail themselves during life of this salutary means of expiation. Shall we be among the number?*

I have said that this subject of Indulgences might be made more interesting by allusion to two

*Much of the first of this Essay is adapted from Father Maurel’s well-known work on Indulgences and from Father Thomas Kinkead’s Explanation of the Baltimore Catechism.

great facts of History—the building of Saint Peter's Church in Rome, and the rise of the so-called Reformation. Saint Peter's Church in Rome, the grandest ecclesiastical edifice in the world, is one of the seven wonders of modern times. Pope Julius II, who ascended the Papal throne, October the thirty-first, 1503, resolved to rebuild the decaying Basilica of Saint Peter, and conceived the noble purpose of erecting to the honor of the Most High, a temple that would call forth the admiration of future ages. He intrusted this gigantic design to Bramante, one of the most celebrated architects of Italy; and, on the eighteenth of April, 1506, Pope Julius laid the corner stone of this magnificent structure, in the presence of an immense concourse of people. But, neither Pope Julius himself who conceived this mighty project, nor the master architect who so ably seconded him, was destined to survive long to carry on this noble work. Pope Julius II died on the twenty-first of February, 1513, leaving to his successor, Pope Leo X, a pontiff who adorned one of the most illustrious periods of history, and the celebrated Michael Angelo to continue and bring to more exquisite perfection this noble work.

By expanding the powers of a vivid imagination, that wonderful organ by which the mind perceives and converses with the spiritualities of nature under her material forms, and drawing from the

descriptions others have given us of it, we shall be able, perhaps, to form some conception of its grandeur; and, in this way, rise to a higher appreciation of this relic of genius, power and beauty.

As we stand in spirit before this mighty monument of faith and piety, and survey, with first and casual glance, its vast proportions, we feel in perfect accord with the sentiment so truthfully expressed by the poet, Byron.

"Thou of temples old or altars new,
Standest alone, with nothing like to thee!"

The approach to Saint Peter's is a magnificent area, resembling the entrance to one of our large city parks, only ten times as spacious. In the center of this grand approach is an Egyptian obelisk, one hundred and thirty feet high, brought from the city of Heliopolis in the first years of the first century, and placed in its present position in the sixteenth century. On either side of this obelisk are lovely fountains, throwing their jets of spray ninety feet into the air. Around us are those grand colonnades, or covered passage ways, which lead to Saint Peter's proper, with two hundred columns, in rows of four, between each two of which, two carriages can be driven abreast, and whose roofs are surmounted by one hundred and sixty-two statues of saints, each twelve feet high. Ascending the mighty palisade of steps, and crossing the portals, we find ourselves in an edifice two

hundred feet long; and yet, we are only in the vestibule of Saint Peters. As we pass the brazen doors, and look around for the first time upon its marvellous interior, we are filled with amazement and awe. We strain our vision to the farthest point from where we stand—six hundred and ten feet—three American city blocks and lo! men who are giants, compared with any of us, appear in that long distance that separates us, only like babies. It is not the distance alone that makes them appear so small; but the colossal statuary, the mighty figures, and the vastness that surrounds them that reduces them to mere specks in the distance. As we advance to the center of this queen of temples, we find ourselves surrounded by a flood of blinding light, it is the glow of glory, 'descending from the dome—the vast and wondrous dome—"to which Diana's marvel was a cell"—spread like a firmament, four hundred feet over our head, bright with the sparkling mosaics of Michael Angelo representing the choirs of angels around God's great throne in heaven. Under this immense dome and over the tomb of Saint Peter to whom Christ said: "Thou art Peter and upon this rock I will build my Church" rests the great high altar. We ascend this mighty dome and go out upon its spacious roof—the roof where workmen and their families live, and where a fountain of sparkling water is sending its pure sprays

heavenward. We go around the inside of the cupola and, standing on the iron terrace, we look down on the pavement below! Men of gigantic stature appear as mere creeping things, and objects of great size seem only like children's toys. We advance yet higher, and we go around, and into the ball on the top of the dome. This ball, which, from the ground, appears no larger than a fair-sized orange, will hold thirteen persons. From this dizzy height we look out upon Rome and what a flood of thoughts come rushing upon us. We recall the Rome of twenty-five hundred years ago and the Rome of to-day; the marble city of the Caesars and the seven-hilled city of the Popes. As we descend and leave Saint Peter's, we lisp again and again the truthful words of the poet, Byron.

But thou of temples old, or altars new,
Standest alone, with nothing like to thee.

Majesty, Power, Glory, Strength and Beauty are all aisled
In this eternal ark of worship undefiled.

Saint Peter's Church in Rome has a capacity of fifty-two thousand, and is unique among all the ecclesiastical structures of this earth. Not all the genius of the world to-day, not all the wealth of nations, could erect another Saint Peter's.

It is said of the great Irish Liberator, Daniel O'Connell, that, in his last will, he consigned his body to Ireland, his soul to God and his heart to

Rome. He had visited the Eternal City; he had viewed with ecstatic wonder its marvellous cathedral; and he had prayed at the tombs of the holy Apostles, Saints Peter and Paul, that repose therein. Nothing therefore, could more significantly express the undying attachment and the unswerving fidelity of this good man for the faith of his fathers, than this characteristic expression, this cherished clause of his last will and testament, "my heart to Rome."

To very few of us will it be given to view this stupendous structure. But all of us can, oftentimes, in spirit, tread its spacious aisles, study its vast proportions; and, always, humbly pray that our hearts may ever remain inseparably united with Christ's Vicar on earth—the successor of Saint Peter—the first pope and bishop of the Holy See of Rome.

Having given you, then, a very meagre and imperfect picture of the vastness, grandeur and beauty of this wonderful basilica, it remains for me to show you, in conclusion, what Saint Peter's Church in Rome and the so-called Reformation, have to do with indulgence.

We have noticed that Pope Julius II laid the corner-stone of this magnificent structure on the eighteenth of April, fifteen hundred and six, in the presence of an immense concourse of people. Martin Luther, the father of the so-called Reform-

ation, was born in Saxony in the year fourteen hundred and eighty-three, nine years before the Discovery of America; and, in fifteen hundred and seven, the year following the laying of the cornerstone of Saint Peter's he pronounced his sacred vows, and was ordained a priest of the order of Saint Augustine.

It is said that one of Luther's most intimate friends, the companion of his youthful toils and pleasures, was struck dead at his side by lightning, as they were walking along together. This terrible warning from heaven, so entirely changed the current of his thoughts at that period of his life that, on the following evening, he abandoned the world and entered the order in which he afterwards pronounced his vows and was ordained a priest. On that memorable occasion he penned the following lines to a friend: "To-day, I say my first mass. Come and hear it. Unworthy sinner as I am, God has been pleased to choose me in the abundance of His mercy. I shall strive to make myself worthy of His goodness; and, in so far as it is possible for such a vile mass of dust, to fulfill His designs. Pray that my holocaust may be pleasing in His sight." He was subsequently sent by his superiors to Rome; and, on seeing the city for the first time, he exclaimed: "Hail Rome! Holy City, thrice sanctified by the blood of the martyrs!" Later he was called to the chair of

philosophy in the University of Wittenberg by its founder, Frederic the Wise, Elector of Saxony. Luther undoubtedly possessed great natural powers; but they were perverted by a proud and restless disposition and a stubborn will. What a cursed thing it is to be of a stubborn, self-willed disposition. A stubborn mind conduces as little to wisdom, or even to knowledge, as a stubborn temper, to happiness. In the solitude of the cloister he had nourished heretical doctrines on the subject of Faith which he also secretly taught from his professional chair; and, in such terms, as to entirely depreciate Good Works. While Saint Peter's Church was building, Pope Leo X, following the example of several of his predecessors, granted certain indulgence to all the faithful who should contribute by their alms towards the completion of the Basilica of Saint Peter. The Archbishop of Mentz, who was intrusted with the promulgation of the Pontifical decree in Germany, charged John Tetzel, a member of the Order of Saint Dominic, to publish the Indulgences in Saxony. The Augustinians, thinking themselves entitled to that privilege, were hurt by what they deemed a show of partiality towards Tetzel. Luther espoused and warmly advocated the claim, and thus a spirit of rivalry and jealousy gave rise to the most fearful storms. The pretext that Luther seized upon for the first public manifesta-

tion of his errors, was the promulgation of the Indulgence granted by Pope Leo X. He then openly assailed, not only the doctrine of Indulgences, but the very first principles of the Catholic religion on which that doctrine is founded. He went rapidly forward in the career of innovation and impugned the teaching of the Church on Original sin and Predestination, on Justification and the Sacraments. He discarded the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, Fasting, Confession, Prayer for the dead and many other pious practices; he declared Good Works to be useless and taught that man is justified and saved by Faith alone. He boasted that he took his doctrine from the Bible only; but, being misled by the false rule of private judgment in its interpretation, he soon fell into the most palpable contradictions and errors. Thus he asserted that man has no free will and, consequently, that he cannot keep the commandments nor avoid evil; that sin does not condemn man provided he firmly believe. When his impious novelties were condemned by the Pope, the impetuous heresiarch attacked the Supremacy of the See of Saint Peter and pushed his errors further and further to their logical consequences. He wrote in coarse and insolent style against Purgatory, Free Will, the Merit of Good Works; in short, against almost every article of the Christian faith. This was the beginning of

that melancholy apostasy which he ventured to call a Reformation. Before we proceed further let us try to clearly understand the meaning of the words:—Catholic, Protestant and Reformation. Catholic means universal; and our religion to which this title belongs, was called universal because all Christian people of every nation acknowledged it to be the only true religion, and because they all acknowledged one and the same head of the Church, and this was the Pope who, although he generally resided at Rome, was the head of the Church in Germany, England, France, Spain and in every part of the world where the Christian religion was professed. But there came a time when some nations, or rather parts of nations, unwilling to submit to his authority, no longer acknowledged him as head of the Church. To check the progress of heresy and wickedness the Emperor Charles V in the year fifteen hundred and twenty-nine issued a decree to the effect that, until the decisions of a general council, Lutheranism should be tolerated wherever it had already been established, but should not be spread any further; that no one should be hindered from saying or hearing mass; and that all invectives against any religion should be prohibited. The Lutherans protested against this decree; and, from this circumstance, is derived their name of Protestants; which appellation has generally been

given to all who are not Catholics. As to the word Reformation, it means an alteration for the better; and it would have been hard indeed if the makers of this great alteration could not have contrived to give it a good name. To obtain the support of the world in the propagation of his impious tenets, Luther exhorted the princes of Germany to confiscate the property of the Church. It was a tempting bait; and, the hope of a share in the magnificent spoils, drew to his party a large number of powerful nobles. Frederic, the Elector of Saxony, and Philip, the Landgrave of Hesse, openly espoused his cause. The favor of Philip was secured, moreover, by other means still more shameful. Philip wished to contract a second marriage, his first wife being still alive. He applied to Luther who assembled the leaders of the religious revolt and procured from them permission for the Landgrave to have two wives at the same time. Luther also assailed the monastic life and the celibacy of the clergy; and, to give the more effect to his assault, he did not scruple to commit the double sacrilege of taking as his wife a young nun whom he had enticed from her convent. Lessons such as these, enforced by such examples, were too acceptable to the corrupt heart of men to be neglected and the new sect made rapid progress. When Luther found himself at the head of a powerful party he abandoned all restraint and

poured out a torrent of invective against the Church, the Pope and the doctrines of the faith. It would be a melancholy task, indeed, to peruse the coarse jests, the low and disgusting buffoonery and the vile indecencies with which his books are filled. In one of his books called "Tisch—Reden"—"Table—Talk"—sayings of his, collected by zealous admirers and carried to all parts of Protestant Germany to propagate his work of scandal and immorality, he openly professes to have had intercourse with the devil. We need only compare his gross and violent language with that employed by the Pope, or by any other Catholic controversialist of the day to see and feel the infinite distance between the accredited messengers of God and the teachers of such strange novelties.

In looking back over the long list of evil inflicted upon the world by the Lutheran heresy, the most disastrous, perhaps, recorded in the history of the Church; when we see its cradle stained with blood, its birth attended with so many crimes, its progress marked by numberless ruins; if we follow, step by step, the conduct of its author, if we consider the duplicity, the results of which deluged his country in blood, the boundless pride and ambition which could sacrifice the peace of the world to an unholy thirst for glory; if we look into the depths of that heart which had become the

abode of evil passions, of shamelessness and base desire, it is exceedingly hard to understand the blindness of those minds for which Luther is still a prophet, an apostle sent from God. Difficult, indeed, is it to imagine how such a leader could have found followers. The relaxation of all restraint, the love of money and of pleasure must have deeply corrupted the hearts of people who could have stooped to such degradation. The most vulgar mind, says Erasmus, must see that the man who raised such fearful storms in the world, who delighted only in cutting and indecent remarks, was not doing the work of God. Yet the Lutherans give to the memory of their Founder, the honor which the Church reserves for the saints, and which they had condemned as scandalous impiety in the Catholics. Great, to be sure, must be the blindness which can recognize an apostolic mission in the ungoverned transports, the passionate struggles and the bitter controversies that make up the so-called Reformer's life. But, as it is not by any means my intention to give you an extended history of the so-called Reformation, I must hasten on. I wished, merely, to place before you a few pertinent facts, bearing on the matter of Indulgences; and, I trust I have said enough to make the connection plain and clear. The subject is so diverse and lengthy that, to treat it from any one view point of the many from which

it is possible to consider it, would require much time and study. Were I disposed, however, or did necessity or the occasion require it, I think I could prove to you quite convincingly and very satisfactorily that Luther was not a Reformer, whether we consider merely his personal character, or the moral, social and political results of his teaching. Far from reforming anything, he deformed everything; so much so, that all thoughtful minds of this twentieth century are gradually awakening to the fact that the movement of the sixteenth century, headed by the Apostate Saxon Monk, was only a Deformation.

If the Catholic Church was the true church during the sixteen centuries that preceded the Lutheran revolt, she certainly could never err or swerve from the truth; and, consequently she could not have been susceptible of reform. On the other hand, if she was not the true Church during the long centuries when she was the only Church, where was the true church? and, on this supposition, those who broke away from her authority and, set up new foundations, must be wrong themselves. Erasmus, the most reliable historian of the so-called Reformation, says, that the Reformation was a comedy which ended, as all comedies do, in the marriage of the hero. It was this way: On the thirteenth of June, fifteen hundred and twenty-five,—eighteen years after he had pronounced his

solemn vows in the convent chapel of Erfurt, Luther violated these sacred engagements by secretly marrying Catherine Bora, a young nun, who had been lured from her convent. He had, previously, as we noted, openly sanctioned adultery, by permitting the Landgrave of Hesse to have two wives at the same time; yet through fear of incurring the prince's ire, he awaited the Landgrave's death before he violated his vows; and, when he did so, he scandalized his followers. Luther's biographers relate that, on a beautiful starlight night, as he and the unfortunate woman that he called his wife were walking along together, she raised her eyes to the bespangled heavens and remarked: "How beautiful the stars seem to-night." "Yes," replied her companion, "they are beautiful to be sure, but they shine not for us."

When Melancthon, who had been a professor with Luther in the University of Wittenberg, and who is said to have been the most gentlemanly of the Reformer's followers, was asked by his aged mother which she should do, remain in the old religion, or follow the new, he replied: mother, the Protestant religion is the religion to live by; but the Catholic, is the religion to die by. Melancthon told his mother the truth; but he did not tell her the whole truth. For, if the Catholic Faith is the one to die by, it must surely be the one also to live

by. It might not be improper to observe here that a large proportion of the boasting atheists who signalized their impiety during the French Revolution, when they came to die, acknowledged that their irreligion had been only a pretense, and that they never doubted in their hearts of the existence of God and the truths of Christianity. So, likewise, do these little instances that I have just related of Luther and Melancthon, plainly indicate the true current of their thoughts regarding the mischievous work which they had begun and propagated.

You remember the words penned by the Saxon Reformer on the occasion of his first mass. On the seventeenth of January, fifteen hundred and forty-six, about a month before his death, he again wrote to a friend: "I am old, decrepit, indolent, fatigued, tremulous, and blind of an eye. I hoped for repose in my old age, but I have nothing but suffering." Just one month later, on the seventeenth of February, fifteen hundred and forty-six, Luther seized a piece of chalk and wrote upon the wall of his room: "*Pestis eram, vivens; moriens, ero mors tua, papa.*" "While I lived I was thy pest; dying, I will be thy death, O Pope!" How different from his words on the occasion of his first mass and of his first visit to Rome!

He died on the night of the eighteenth of February, fifteen hundred and forty-six, with a

blasphemy on his lips. For his poor Catherine and her children, nobody seemed to care. They lived and died in poverty and misery, after vainly seeking for the support of the Protestant princes and the Reformer's other admirers.

Several centuries have now passed since Martin Luther, the Apostate Monk, went to his eternal account; but the Church of Christ which he so shamefully abandoned, and her glorious head that he would have crushed, still live on, triumphant and unconquerable as ever. "Were Luther," says a writer, "to rise from his grave he could not possibly recognize as his own, or as members of the society which he founded, those teachers who, in their church, would fain, nowadays, be considered as his successors. The dissolution of the Protestant church is inevitable; her frame is so thoroughly rotten that no farther patching will avail. The whole structure of evangelical religion is shattered and few look with sympathy on its tottering or its fall. Growing immorality, a consequence of contempt for religion, in many places, concurs, also, as a cause to its deeper downfall. The multitude cut the knot that galls them, march boldly forward and fling themselves into the arms of atheism and infidelity in thought and deed.'"*

While the sects that broke from the Church, like

*Anonymous.

rotten branches, are hastening to speedy disintegration and are falling to pieces, the Roman Catholic Church stands like a mighty, living, energizing oak of the forest, or, rather, like some majestic monument amid the desert of antiquity, just in its proportions, sublime in its associations; rich in the virtue of its saints; cemented by the blood of its martyrs; pouring forth for ages the unbroken series of its venerable hierarchy; and, like the pyramid in the desert, only the more magnificent, from the ruins by which it is surrounded. Its light is light from heaven; it will assist us, its children, through the paths of our earthly pilgrimage; and, if we only persevere, good, faithful Catholics, to the end, like the fiery pillar of the chosen Israel, it will cheer the desert of our bondage and light us to the land of our liberation.

Resurrection.

“He is risen, He is not here, behold the place
where they laid Him.” Saint Mark XVI.

RESURRECTION.

As I look into your faces at the close of this time-honored and beautiful festal day, I notice that those who are here to-night, are the same, with perhaps a few exceptions, that have followed me in my discourses, each Sunday evening, during the Lenten season, that, once again, has come and passed away. Those of you who have listened to me, regularly and attentively, in the course of these sermons, will remember, as you recall them, that they are all to some extent, connected. We started out with "The Good Catholic's Daily Life." Our duties and obligations towards God, our neighbor and ourselves which form the make-up of this "Daily Life," are discharged in Time and are rewarded or punished in Eternity. Logically, therefore, the one subject follows the other. We, then, took our stand on that mysterious bridge which separates these two periods of our existence, a bridge, that we must all, eventually, pass over; and we noticed how safely and how calmly he journeys across the sea of Time to the shore of Eternity who keeps the headlight of Death as

his beacon always before him. Afterwards, in a sermon of an entirely different nature from any of the foregoing, we learned how powerful an aid to correct and perfect living, is the constant and prudent government of the Tongue. Finally, the Cross, as the symbol and as the daily portion of the Christian, has led us up, in fitting conclusion, to the consideration of the grandest and sublimest of Christian mysteries—Christ's Resurrection. O holy Feast of Easter! how dear thou shouldst be to every truly Catholic heart! For if, at any time, the life of our Blessed Lord upon earth seemed a failure, if ever conquest appeared triumphant and complete, it was surely when the Blessed Body of the World's Redeemer hung lifeless upon the infamous gibbet of the cross. Hell was then apparently victorious. Its blind instruments, the ungrateful Jews, had exercised their pleasure on the Son of God. They traduced Him as a malefactor and impostor, and He said nothing to the charge. They offered to believe Him, if He came down from the cross; but, He declined the challenge. By His loud acclamations to His heavenly Father He even appeared to countenance their triumph, and finally completed their conviction by closing His eyes before them in death.

But vain, utterly vain, are the schemes of men, whose highest wisdom must be forever branded as folly, when they conflict with the purposes

of the Most High. God's ways are not our ways; neither are His thoughts our thoughts. For, did it not behoove Christ, as the sacred text assures us, to suffer such things and so enter into His rest? "Destroy this temple" said Jesus, "and in three days I will raise it up." Did not those shining ministers of heaven who descended in dazzling array on that first glorious Easter morn and removed with angelic ease the ponderous obstruction, declare to the wondering and affrighted Mary! "He is risen, He is not here: behold the place where they laid Him." Yes, Jesus Christ has risen! The great purpose for which He came on earth has been triumphantly accomplished; the stupendous facts prophesied of the World's Redeemer have all been minutely carried out; the humiliations of the Passion have given place to the glories of the Resurrection; the pains and sorrows of Good Friday pale and vanish in the sunlit joys of Easter. Yes, Jesus Christ has risen. He has laid aside the trappings of death and the grave and has gone forth immortal and impassible forever. Yes, Jesus Christ has risen, and His glorious resurrection from the tomb is the keystone in the arch of faith, the most brilliant luminary in the constellation of Christian festivals, and, as such, is well deserving of lifelong contemplation and study; for, as the apostle says, "if Christ be not risen,

then is our preaching vain and your faith is also vain." I Cor. XV-14.

Christ's triumph over sin and death and hell is unquestionably the greatest, the grandest, the crowning proof of His divine and heavenly mission, the confirmation of our unconquerable faith, the pledge of our immortal hope and the foundation stone of that old and stupendous structure—Christianity. In fact the Resurrection of Christ rests on so solid a foundation that it is professed by every Christian sect, as well as by orthodox christians. Our Blessed Savior Himself frequently predicted, in attestation of His Godhead, that He would rise again the third day after His death. This He declared was to be the decisive proof of His heavenly mission and the confirmation for evermore of the truth of His utterances. When the Scribes and Pharisees demanded a miracle as an evidence that He was the Messiah He replied: "A wicked and adulterous generation seeketh a sign, and a sign shall not be given it, but the sign of Jonas the prophet; for as Jonas was in the belly of the whale three days and three nights, so shall the son of man be in the heart of the earth three days and three nights." Matt. XII-39.

On another occasion the Jews answered and said to Him: "What sign dost Thou give seeing that Thou dost these things? Jesus answered and

said to them: Destroy this temple and in three day I will raise it up. The Jews, thinking that He referred to their temple of worship said: six and forty years was this temple in building and wilt Thou raise it up in three days? But Jesus spoke of the temple of His body. When, therefore, He was risen again from the dead, His disciples remembered that He had said this and they believed the scripture and the word that Jesus had said " St. John II 18-22.

Indeed, so well aware were the enemies of Christ of His prophecy with regard to His resurrection, and so clearly did they understand the purpose of our Savior's prediction, that, the next day which followed the day of preparation, the chief priests and Pharisees came together to Pilate, saying: "Sir, we have remembered that that seducer said while he was yet alive; After three days I will rise again. Command, therefore, the sepulchre to be guarded until the third day, lest perhaps, his disciples come and steal him away, and say to the people: He is risen from the dead and the last error shall be worse than the first. Pilate said to them; you have a guard, go, guard it as you know. And they, departing, made the sepulchre sure, sealing the stone and setting guards." Matt. XXVII-62. And thus the very precautions which they fancied would destroy the notion of Christ's Resurrection, served but to es-

tablish its belief beyond the possibility of a doubt. In His familiar conversation with His chosen disciples, our Blessed Lord frequently referred to, and clearly foretold, His Resurrection from the dead.

On one occasion when they abode together in Galilee, He said to them: "The Son of Man shall be betrayed into the hands of men and they shall kill Him and the third day He shall rise again." Matt. XVII.

There can be no doubt, then, that our Blessed Savior prophesied His own Resurrection. That He actually rose from the dead, in fulfillment of His prediction, is abundantly proved by the most overwhelming testimony. We read in the 28th chapter of the gospel of Saint Matthew that Mary Magdalen and some other holy women, whose piety never wearied of the service of Christ, went betimes, in the morning to perfume the body of their Lord. On their journey to the sepulchre they questioned among themselves how they should be able to roll away the stone from the entrance of the monument, for it was very great. But, as they drew nigh they perceived that the stone was rolled away and the entrance open; and, looking into the sepulchre, they saw an angel in the shape of a young man clothed in white, sitting on the right side, who thus addressed them. "Fear not you, for I know you seek Jesus, who was crucified.

He is not here, for He is risen, as He said. Come and see the place where the Lord was laid. And going quickly tell ye His disciples that He is risen: and behold He will go before you into Galilee: There you shall see Him. Lo, I have foretold it to you." They hastened at once to execute their commission and upon their report, Saint Peter and Saint John repaired to the monument, and entering saw the linen cloths lying and the handkerchief which had been about His head wrapped up; but, being able to discover nothing more, departed for their home. Mary Magdalen, however, lingered, weeping near the mouth of the sepulchre, and eager to find Him whom she loved, she stooped down, and, looking into the tomb, perceived two angels in white apparel, sitting, one at the head and the other at the foot where the sacred body had lain. They asked her why she wept. Because, said she, they have taken away my Lord and I know not where they have laid Him. She turned around, and seeing a man there standing unknown to her, took him for the gardener and said: "Sir, if you have taken Him, tell me, where you have laid Him. Jesus said, Mary!" Mary knew him at the word and in an ecstasy of joy, exclaimed: "Rabboni, which is to say, Master! Do not touch me, said Jesus, for I am not yet ascended to my Father, but tell my brethren that I ascend to my Father and to your Father, to my God

and to your God." Thus does the Evangelist describe the first apparition of our Savior after His glorious Resurrection from the tomb. On the same day He appeared also to the holy women who were returning from the monument; to Saint Peter; to two of the disciples who were on a journey to a neighboring town, and to the Apostles as they sat at table. He, likewise appeared to His apostles, again assembled after eight days; to some of His disciples who were fishing on the sea of Tiberias: to the eleven Apostles in Galilee on the Mount where he had appointed to meet them, and to which apparition it is thought Saint Paul alluded, when he said that He was seen by more than five hundred brethren at once. Lastly, He was seen by His beloved disciples in whose presence He was borne aloft into heaven where He sitteth at the right hand of God and whence He shall come again in great power and majesty to judge the living and the dead.

It must be observed that the manifestations of our risen Lord were so evident and so frequent as to leave no room for doubt, denial or contention about the truth of His Resurrection in the flesh. He did not present himself to His disciples as a spectral shadow, neither were His visits the sudden and transient apparitions of a disembodied spirit. He continued to frequent their company:

He conversed with them; instructed them, and ate and drank in their presence. When the Apostles were slow to believe, He gently reproved them saying, "See my hands and my feet that it is I myself, for a spirit hath not flesh and bones as you see me to have." To the incredulous Thomas who declared in presence of his brethren that unless he would see in His hands and feet the print of the nails, and put his hand in the wound in His side he would not believe, Our Savior said: "Put in thy finger hither, and see my hands; and bring hither thy hand and put it into my side; and be not incredulous but believing." Thereupon Thomas exclaimed: "My Lord and my God!" Yes. "Because thou hast seen me, Thomas, thou hast believed. Blessed are they that have not seen and have believed."

The history of Christ's Resurrection must be tested by the ordinary evidence brought to bear on the examination of any historical fact. We depend, in a great measure, for our information, on the statements of others. Most of the people of the United States, for example, know only from hearsay that such cities as London, Dublin or Paris exist; while the human race relies on the pages of history for their belief that Caesar was assassinated, that Columbus discovered America, or that Tyre and Sidon once flourished. Now the fact of Christ's Resurrection from the dead is recorded

in the books of the New Testament, the authenticity of which is acknowledged by the severest critics; to the veracity of which the haughtiest reason submits; and, which sound philosophy, resting on their truth and authenticity, concludes from the one and the other to be divinely inspired. If, then, the Resurrection as described by the Evangelists be not a fact, we must infer, either that the Apostles were themselves deceived; or, that they were deceivers. Now they could not possibly have been deceived, for not once only, but several times, under different circumstances, and at varying hours during the space of forty days, they had every sensible proof which man could require that they, in all truth and reality, beheld their risen Savior; and, consequently, there is not the slightest ground for supposing that such reliable witnesses could have possibly been mistaken; otherwise no reliance could be placed on human testimony on which all history, whether sacred or profane, must necessarily rest. Neither, could they have been deceivers; for, what could they possibly gain by deception? Certainly, such a course of action would not have advanced their worldly interests; they made no money by it; neither could they thereby obtain honors, fame, or worldly influence. On the contrary, they knew and felt, as they afterwards experienced, that, by proclaiming

the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, and preaching in His name, only scourges, chains and cruel death awaited them on every side. Yet they faltered not, made no secret of their faith, but preached their Risen Lord publicly and boldly. They even wrought miracles for the express purpose of vindicating the truth of the Resurrection, and consequently, of putting beyond all doubt the claims of Christianity to the acceptance of mankind. If civilized nations regard the verdict of twelve jurymen as the most approved and equitable mode of deciding questions of the greatest moment, how can we discredit the unanimous testimony of twelve Apostolic witnesses who saw with their eyes, heard with their ears and touched with their hands their risen Lord; who devoted their lives to the proclamation of this stupendous miracle; who preached it, not in obscure corners of the earth, but in Jerusalem itself; who converted thousands of hearers who had ample opportunities of testing the correctness of their declaration; who suffered stripes and imprisonment rather than deny it; and who, finally, sealed the dogma of the Resurrection, with the testimony of their blood. The Resurrection of Christ from the dead is then the most splendid testimony of His divinity; the keystone in the arch of faith; and the most brilliant luminary in the constellation of Christian festivals.

Easter-day grows larger as the years move on, and rests upon a much wider basis, as in ever-varying form it takes its place in that more extensive Easter to which the whole creation bears witness. It tells us that the law of life about us and within us, is, that darkness and evil cannot reign supreme. The pendulum of the great clock of the ages swings to and fro. But those who look up at the vast, slow hands upon the face, see that they move forward only. That there is a budding morrow in midnight, is the message of the larger Easter of the universe. When Saint Paul first preached to the people of Athens, and related to them the wondrous life of Jesus, as it is recorded in the gospel, they perceived the marvelous genius of Christ as it is displayed in the parable of the Prodigal Son, and His grandeur and power in the series of works told by the Evangelist. They received the doctrine of the divine birth of Jesus with favor and belief; for, they were accustomed to think of their heroes as born of a union, contracted between gods and men. But, when Saint Paul began to throw the bridge of the Resurrection across the eternities, he was interrupted by his hearers, and his audience dispersed in confusion. This argues that the Resurrection, as the proof of life after death, is the most startling doctrine the Church has ever advanced for the belief and investigation of the world. It is the bugle call

of God to every brain, to every soul; and it is received with derision, on the one hand, and with devotion on the other. And so, as no historic fact was ever more invincibly established than that our Blessed Savior actually died and rose again in His own flesh; so no dogma of our holy Faith is more clearly proved, or more undeniably certain, than that we shall all rise again in the Resurrection on the last and awful day of Judgment.

That ancient and chosen people of God, the Jews, believed it: Christ symbolized and testified to its truth by His own Resurrection; and Holy Church in all her confessions, precepts and decisions, has ever adhered most firmly to it. We ourselves make profession of our belief in this stupendous article of our Holy Faith every day of our lives; and, as often as we repeat that beautiful compendium of our religion, the Apostles Creed—when, after acknowledging our belief in all the truths therein contained, we finally conclude by saying: “*credo carnis Resurrectionem et vitam aeternum*,” I believe in the Resurrection of the body and life everlasting.

Upon this consoling doctrine did the holy and the just, the best and greatest men of all ages and nations rest their faith, to this did they look forward. Holy Job, that unequalled model of perfect patience and resignation, dejected and alone, long centuries ago, looking down through the vista of

futurity, burst forth into those admirable and comforting words, that have ever since been the hope and stay of succeeding generations. "I know that my Redeemer liveth and that in the last day I shall rise again from the earth, and in my flesh I shall see God my Savior. This my hope is laid up in my bosom."

With the same invincible assurance did innumerable martyrs support themselves, amid torments the bare narration of which, fills us with fear and dread. With the same unfailing hope did the penitents of the desert encourage themselves under their most severe and cruel privations; and with the same, likewise, shall you and I be able to smile over our corporal dissolution and descend, even with complacency, into the dust from which we borrowed our existence. Yes, our bodies shall indeed go down into the grave; and, mingling with the common mass, lie there, unheeded and forgotten, perhaps for ages; the ceaseless wheel of time will pass and repass over them, and the winds and storms of heaven sing our requiem, as ages fade into each other. The gay and careless world will laugh and jog on as of yore; the solemn brood of care plod on; the busy foot of unthinking man echo again and again within our silent mansion of repose; and each shall chase his favorite phantom as before; but the sequel is as infallible as God himself; the day, the unerring day shall at

length arrive, when it shall suddenly start from its long last sleep and its vital functions shall play again with all the vigor and buoyancy of youth. By what immediate agency this wonderful change shall be effected; is not at present, our business to inquire. It is enough for us to know that He Whose almighty fiat called into existence immensity and all its wonders, who created the original mass out of nothing, can as easily reassemble its scattered ingredients, and reorganize what was only for a time dissolved. This great day may be, as yet, remote, as it is unquestionably unknown, and impenetrably hid in the infinite wisdom and knowledge of Almighty God; but, do not imagine that it is on that account the less fixed or inevitable. It is not more true that this day is than that that shall be. Passing away is engraved on all things earthly. Kingdoms, empires, and republics have arisen, flourished, and fallen. The great affairs of nations and the private concerns of individuals are equally disappearing, and making room for that grand catastrophe which will close the series of time and give the finishing page to human history. On that great and awful day we shall all finally meet again; in resurrection we shall all be contemporaries. You and I may have different fortunes. Destiny may divide us and scatter us broadcast over the world, but here, at last, we shall infallibly meet; and, after the long

lapse of intervening ages, take on again the forms by which we are now distinguished, perhaps call to mind the occasion that now assembles us together, and look back to the anticipation that has been to-day suggested. Many times, no doubt, as we view the life around us, the words of Jeremias and Job suggest themselves to us also: "Why doth the way of the wicked prosper; and why is it well with all them that transgress and do wickedly?" Nay, frequently, even some Catholics who know but little of the world, and are not accustomed to the struggle, feel their faith and religious zeal weaken before the multitude of scandals, and dangers, and unfavorable circumstances in which they are placed for the practice of piety and devotion. They see the cold and common indifference, the levity and extravagance of customs: the marked positiveness that dominates all classes; the affluence of some people, apparently without religion or restraint, who, notwithstanding everything, live and die without occupying themselves with their future destiny, and without the chastisement and remorse which, according to the Catholic Faith, ought to accompany the impious during their lives of perpetual disorder. Such as these would do well to recall with frequency and attention, the words of our Blessed Lord in the parable of the cockle: "Suffer both to grow until the harvest; and, in the time of the harvest, I will say to

the reapers: Gather up first the cockle, and bind it into bundles to burn, but the wheat gather ye into my barn." Matt. XIII. 24-30. Criminally abusing their liberty, men may make what they please of this present life; but the day is inevitably coming, when all iniquity shall stop its mouth, and when Divine Justice will mete to each and everyone the reward or punishment he deserves.

And if now, we sometimes marvel that here below the good suffer wrongly and the wicked go unpunished; if you and I ever find ourselves the victims of mockery, raillery or deception, oh, rest assured that Resurrection day will right all wrongs; correct every error, and fully, completely, and satisfactorily vindicate the claims of injured justice. Yes, if there are any difficulties in the ways of God or of those who serve Him, Resurrection Day will fully solve them all. If the martyrs suffered themselves to be made the sport of cruelty in every possible shape and form, Resurrection Day will be their Justification. If thousands of penitents crowded to the deserts and there submitted themselves to torments which some would call extravagant, Resurrection Day will be their ample apology. Yes, and if some, even in this advanced stage of the world's history, this enlightened but wicked twentieth century, are found to throw away the choicest worldly advantages, to

devote themselves to the hard and unremitting toil and ungrateful work of God's ministry, and others to immure themselves in the gloom and destitution of a cloister, Resurrection Day will stamp their censured choice with the truest wisdom. In fine, to whatever apparent successive lengths the servants of God may have pushed their holy fervor, Resurrection Day will immediately correct every appearance and triumphantly vindicate their reputed folly.

I emphatically repeat that, while this beautiful and consoling belief of Mother Church is calculated to arouse our faith, it is, at the same time, especially and significantly fitted to enhance and animate our hope. Where is the mother who could even for a single instant wilfully harbor the thought that she will never again behold the little one that perished like a blossom from her arms; the tender husband, that the wife of his bosom will never again rejoin him, the aged parent that death has parted her forever from the dear, familiar form, of the boy who was the staff and stay of her declining years! Oh yes, there is a hope that survives the tomb, promises and anticipations which we all fondly trust will some day meet with a bright and happy realization. When this world presents but a gloomy prospect, when fortune frowns and all seems dark and drear, how sweet and consoling to look forward to that other, where

all is bright and fair. When we mourn over the lost friends of our tenderest affection; when we behold the gentle forms of youth and beauty lowered deep down into the ground, and hear the cold and cruel clods of earth fall thick and heavily on the last mortal remains of the holy and the pure, the innocent and the good, how encouraging the hope that we shall all be reunited again, that Resurrection Day will bring about a meeting that shall know no parting.

If the mere conception of the reunion of good men in a future state could infuse a momentary rapture into the mind of an ancient pagan philosopher; if an airy speculation could inspire him with such delight; what may we be expected to feel who are assured of such an event by the true sayings of God Himself? How should we rejoice in the prospect, the certainty rather, of spending a blissful eternity with those whom we loved on earth; of seeing them emerge from the ruins of the tomb, and the still deeper ruins of the Fall, not only uninjured, but refined and perfected? What delight will it not then afford us to renew the sweet counsels we have taken together; to recount the toils of combat and the labor of the way; and to approach, not the house alone, but the very throne of God in company, in order to join in the symphony of heavenly voices and lose ourselves

amidst the splendors and fruitions of the Beatific Vision!

To those whose faith and hope extend not beyond the narrow limits of the tomb; who say that with death all ends; and who deny a future state of unending existence; to those, of course, the grand, the sublime and inspiring truths embodied in this joyous Easter festival, can offer no consolation. But, for us who are not ignorant concerning them that are asleep, we should not be sorrowful even as those who have no hope. For if, says the Apostle Saint Paul, "we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so those who have slept through Jesus will God bring with Him." We know that death is, at most, but a long and lampless night in which we make the grave our bed; and, as no night is without its morn, so will the night of death give place to the bright morn of immortality; and that for the temporary separation that follows in the destroyer's steps there will spring up bright creations to defy his power, and his dark path will become for us a way of light to heaven. This is the joy; this is the hope that Easter brings; and, that this joy, this hope may remain with us all, during the days of our pilgrimage here, and be a secure pledge of our own glorious resurrection hereafter, is a blessing I ask for all who have listened to my words.

Judgment.

Heaven and earth shall pass, but my words shall not pass. Matt. C. XXIV—V. 37.

There is nothing covered that shall not be revealed: nor hidden, that shall not be known. Luke XII—2.

It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the Living God. Heb. X—31.

I will gather together all nations, and will bring them down into the Valley of Josaphat. Joel III—2.

But the day of the Lord shall come as a thief: in which the heavens shall pass away with great violence, and the elements shall be melted with heat, and the earth and the works which are in it, shall be burnt up. II Saint Peter III—10.

JUDGMENT.

The condemnation of the rich glutton who, at the time of his death was buried in hell, and the happy end of poor Lazarus who, on his departure from this vale of tears, was immediately translated into Abraham's bosom, plainly show that the soul undergoes a particular judgment the moment that death separates it from the body. But, besides this particular judgment which awaits us all on our departure hence, the Almighty has, likewise, appointed a day of general reckoning, when all mankind, without exception, shall be summoned before His awful tribunal to render an account of their works.

Nor is it without a purpose that holy Church at this particular season places before us the terrors of Judgment Day. As with the penitential time of Advent she commences another of her years, so in placing before us for our consideration and meditation on the first Sunday of this same holy season, so terrifying a subject, she wishes that we look back over the years that we have already lived, and forward to those which

a merciful Creator may yet be pleased to grant us.

If, then, in the course of these reflections, there occur aught calculated to arouse your fear, or to impress you with sentiments of alarm and dread, profit by them to remedy the failures of the past; to right the present; and, by these means, prepare to meet, not alone that future over which death stands watchman and whose ending is the grave, but, also, that greater, wider, and more awful future that shall know no end.

The mighty universe of which our habitable globe forms so small a portion has been in existence well nigh six thousand years. The constellations have their risings and their settings, and the great cycles through which this material world passes without decay and which measure time to man, go on, now, as of yore. The same powerful orb whose rising and setting marks the birth and death of each day's life, still gladdens the earth as on the first bright morning of its creation, and is still casting the same rays of light and heat on the people of to-day, that it did on the myriads whose race is run. But, let us not deceive ourselves; indefinite duration is not the final destiny of this universe. It will not find its termination only in the imperceptible crumbling of its materials or clogging of its wheels. No ages of long and deepening twilight shall gradually bring the last setting of the sun; no mountains, sinking

under the decrepitude of years, nor weary rivers, ceasing to rejoice in their courses, shall prepare men for the final abolition of this earth. But, the time shall most certainly come when the world shall have fallen on its last days, and when the shadow of approaching doom shall lie deep and dark on every human heart. Yes, a time shall most surely come when the system of the thousand worlds that rolled through space at the first bidding of the Almighty, shall give evidence to the world of its approaching destruction and that their own purpose is nearing its completion. A time when the goodly frame of all things visible shall be rent and crushed by the mighty arm of its omnipotent Maker, and when the same divine hand that so wonderfully drew the elements from the dark and troubled slumbers of their nothingness shall cast them into their tomb, that they may no longer stand between His Face and the creatures whom He shall come to judge.

The particular time or day allotted for this universal judgment has never been revealed to any creature; and, consequently, is known to God alone. Sacred Scripture, however, assures us that there shall be signs in the stars; the moon shall pale, and the sun shall refuse to give its light. Upon earth there shall be distress of nations, men withering away with fear in expectation of what shall come upon them. There will be wars, fam-

ines and pestilences. Rumor will follow rumor, as shadow follows shadow when clouds are blown across the troubled heavens, raising vague forms of some infinite terror in the heart of the world's last generations, and warning them that the end of all things is at hand. In fine, when the last mortal man shall have succumbed to the general doom of nature, and this whole world shall have become one universal sepulchre and shall have entombed all humanity, then, shall the commissioned angel descend like lightning from heaven and, placing one foot on the sea and the other on the land, shall proclaim to the buried nations that time shall be no more, and shall send o'er hill and dale, o'er sea and river, that final awakening blast, "Arise, ye dead, and come to Judgment."

At the wailing note of the archangel's trumpet, the graves will burst their narrow boundaries; the sea give up its dead; and the countless millions that have peopled all the centuries, clothed again with their mortal bodies, shall be marshalled together to the Valley of Judgment.

Now, use your imagination to its farthest limits and picture to yourselves an immense plain, stretching away to the uttermost point of vision and blackened on every side with human beings. Two eminences raise their heads over the assembled multitudes and add their weighty significance to the impending event: they are Mount Calvary,

a standing testimony of the telling drama once enacted on its awful summit; and Mount Olivet from whose cloud-capped top the world's Redeemer was borne aloft into heaven. Presently, a light breaks upon the vision of the assembled throng, a mere speck at first, but gradually gaining in intensity as the dead file into columns at the approach of the angels of Judgment. Anon, the Son of Man, appears in a cloud with great power and majesty, bearing aloft the thrice and ever-blessed cross—the sacred symbol of the world's redemption. “And, then, shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and the wicked shall call upon the hills to cover them and the mountains to shield them from the wrath of the Lamb.” And, oh, what an assembly that will be! There will be gathered together all the countless beings that have ever lived, from our First Parents, down to the last man that shall draw the breath of life:—all the swarming millions that flourished in the days before the Flood; all the unnumbered victims that perished on every battle-field of the world; the infinite hosts swept away in all the floods, conflagrations and heart-rending catastrophes recorded on the pages of ancient and modern history. There will be the strangled babe and the guilty mother; the darling child called away in the days of its purity and innocence, and the father grown old in his iniquities. There will be the wild and

wayward boy and his reserved and modest brother; the wanton girl and her chaste and retiring sister; the wife that toiled and sorrowed, and the husband that was hard-hearted, over-exacting, and cruel. The sinner, to his confusion and dismay, will there meet his accomplice in crime, and the good man will behold again the friends that he encouraged on the heavenward road. And we will be there, too; you will recognize me and I shall recognize you; for, just as surely as we are assembled here to-day in the unseen Presence of Jesus in the Tabernacle, just as surely as the sun shines in the heavens above and the earth sustains our feet, just as surely as God liveth and has said it, just so surely shall we one day be marshalled to judgment, just so surely shall we fall into our place at the bidding of the Angel's trumpet.

And, what, pray you, will be the subject of this Judgment? Every thought that men have conceived, from the first glad feeling of enraptured admiration that arose in the hearts of our First Parents, when, in wonderment and awe, they first looked out upon the newly made world, down to the last thought on the mind of him who shall be the last to die. All the words that were ever uttered, in blessing or in cursing, in earnest or in jest; for, as Holy Writ declares: "For every idle word that men shall speak, they shall render an account of it on the day of Judgment." You shall

be summoned to a most rigorous account for every mass you have heard and every confession you have made; I, for every holy sacrifice I have offered and absolution I have imparted. Yours will be the Judgment of a simple Catholic christian, mine will be the judgment of a priest. All the thoughts, words and deeds of childhood, youth, manhood's prime, and tottering age; the good we might have done and did not do; the ignorance, malice, and short-comings of a life time,—all shall be carefully unfiled for the most rigid and exacting scrutiny, before a judge who receives no bribes, takes no excuses, but will judge that which is just. Truly, in the presence of such harrowing thoughts as these, we are constrained to cry out with holy Church: *Dies irae, dies illa,*

Day of wrath, that dreadful day.

What shall guilty I then plead?
Who for me will intercede,
When the saints shall comfort need?

Judge of justice, hear my prayer;
Spare me, Lord, in mercy spare;
Ere the reckoning—day appear.

When the final sentence shall have been pronounced, the elect and reprobate shall go their different ways, to meet no more while heaven delights, while hell torments, while God Himself reigns on. To die and part is a less evil; but, to

part and live; there, there is the torment. And, oh, what partings there shall be! The line of separation will be drawn between those who were united by the closest bonds. The child will be separated from the mother that bore him; father, from the son of his affection, and friend from the friend of his bosom. Mother will be separated from daughter; wife, from husband; and pastor, from people. On this side of the grave, even the partings that are severest on flesh and blood, are not entirely devoid of hope. In the farewell of the emigrant, torn by cruel fate from country and friends, hope smiles in his tears; the fortune that drives away, may bring back again; while, in the separation entailed by death itself, we look forward, at least, to an eternal union in heaven. But, the parting that will follow the judgment sentence will leave no fissure in its cloud for the gleam of hope: it will be final and irrevocable. The wicked will descend to their place of torment, never again to behold the faces of those they loved; never again to hear the dear voices that once sounded like sweet music to their ears; never again to bask beneath the smiles that were the sunshine of their lives. They shall have lost all that is good, and shall be in everlasting possession of all that is evil. They will depart from the Valley of Judgment, branded with the Savior's malediction, and shall begin their unending punishment with

the awful picture of the Last Judgment indelibly engraven on their souls, and with the bitter and unavailing truth ever before them that they might have been saved; and that, never as long as God shall be God, will their torments end.

Judgment Day will be, above all other days, God's own Day. That day, at least, if no other, will clearly manifest to all men the admirable wisdom, goodness and equity of the Creator in His dealings with His creatures, and will forever vindicate the conduct of God in the events of this world, to the eternal glory of the good and the overwhelming and lasting confusion of the wicked. Yes, say the Fathers of the Church, it belongs to the Justice of God that there should be a day when the mysteries of iniquity will be unveiled, the mask of hypocrisy raised, and the apostles of error and falsehood confounded and condemned. In this last great act on the stage of this world, all things will finally be put in their natural place: innocence will be exalted, and villainy, deposed. Man, in his ignorance and blinded by his passions, dares to summon God Himself to his tribunal and demand of Him why He permits the good to suffer wrongly and the wicked to go unpunished; why some are pinched with the most miserable want, while others roll in wealth and affluence. The motives that influenced the Almighty to deal thus with His creatures will be revealed on this great

day, and men will then acknowledge that nothing was more in accordance with rule and order in the dispensations of the Most High, than what appeared to them disorder:—"that all His ways were righteous, and all His paths were peace."

With two questions, I shall conclude this discourse. Will a General Judgment really take place, or, is it merely the dream of religious enthusiasm? Yes, it shall most certainly be; for, the truths of faith are as immutable as God Himself. You will never question the certainty of Judgment Day, and you will be well prepared for its reality, if you bear always in mind the words of Eternal Truth with which the gospel of to-day concludes: "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away." Deny a General Judgment, and you must, perforce, deny the entire code of Christian Revelation and Belief.

Will the end of the world be soon? Yes, it shall be soon. Some may fail to see the coming disaster; but the hand writing is on the wall. "People are eating, drinking and making merry. So it was when the waters came and covered the earth; so it was the very night when the Assyrian came down on Babylon; so it was when Goth and Vandal swept over the once peaceful Empire of Augustus; so it was when the guillotine sprung up like a mushroom in the night in the heart of the world's fashion and license; so comes the earthquake, the

cyclone, the flood; so comes every disaster that befalls men and families and states.” *

Do not misunderstand me. When I say that the end of the world shall be soon, I do not mean, surely, to imply that I have even the faintest conception of a happening that lies impenetrably hid in the infinite knowledge and wisdom of God alone. But, as far as we are individually concerned, the Judgment is near at hand and the end of the world is not far off. We know, beyond the possibility of a doubt, that death may claim us for its own at any moment, and that the sentence pronounced on each and every human being in the Particular Judgment that immediately follows death, will decide his fate for all eternity. After that, the world may go on for years, perhaps for ages; but, its duration, long or short, will concern us no more. For us, the world shall have ended with the day of our death; and the Last, or General Judgment, will only confirm the particular sentence that has already been ineffacably recorded in the Judgment Book of God.

*Fr. Pollard, S. J.

Purgatory.

It is a holy and a wholesome thought to pray
for the dead that they may be loosed from their
sins. II Mach. C. 12—46.

PURGATORY.

The belief in a Purgatory or a third and middle state of souls is an article of faith, grounded not only on Scripture, but also upon the perpetual tradition and constant practice of all ages and nations since the earliest years of Christianity. We read in the twelfth chapter of the Second Book of Machabees, which is the last Book of the Old Testament, that, in one of the battles which God's chosen people waged under the leadership of the valiant and religious Judas Machabaeus, some of his soldiers were slain, because they forfeited the Divine protection in acting contrary to the prescriptions of the Law of Moses. This religious chief, grieved at the sin of which his men had been guilty, and still hoping that they might obtain mercy, on account of the piety they had manifested in dying for their religion and their race, made a collection of twelve thousand drachms of silver which he sent to Jerusalem that sacrifice and prayer might be offered in their behalf. This act of the pious chieftain assures us that he must have known the doctrine that, after sins have been

remitted, there sometimes remains due a temporal punishment, from which punishment Judas hoped by prayer and sacrifice to release the souls of his deceased friends and fellow warriors. Holy, therefore, and salutary, says the Sacred Text, is the thought of praying for the dead that they may be loosed from their sins.

Among the last instructions which the aged Tobias gave his son he counselled him to lay out his bread and wine upon the burial of a just man; that is to say, after the death of a just man give alms to the poor that they may offer up their prayers to God in his favor. Tobias IV, 17-18. Our Blessed Savior in His Holy Gospel declares that, whosoever shall speak a word against the Son of Man it shall be forgiven him; but he that shall speak a word against the Holy Ghost it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world nor in the world to come. Matt. XII. Saint Augustine urges this passage in favor of a middle state and says that the words "in the world to come" show that there are sins that can be remitted in the future life. In His Sermon on the Mount Christ says: "Be at agreement with thy adversary betimes, whilst thou art in the way with him; lest, perhaps, the adversary deliver thee to the Judge, and the Judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison. Amen I say to thee thou shalt not go out from thence till thou pay the last farth-

ing." When, then, our Blessed Lord says "thou shalt not go out from thence till thou pay the last farthing" we must understand that there is a prison in the future life from which the soul is released, only after it has fully satisfied the justice of God.

All the Fathers unanimously agree regarding the doctrine of a middle state; or souls suffering for a time on account of their sins. One of the earliest Christian writers, the learned Tertullian, who died about the year 220, describing the duty of a faithful widow to her deceased husband says: "She prays for his soul and begs repose for him and his company in the first resurrection, and offers sacrifice on the anniversary days of his death."

Saint Jerome, who died in the year four hundred and twenty, writing to a certain man named Pamachius, on the death of the wife of the latter says: "Other husbands strew violets, roses, lilies and purple flowers on the graves of their wives, our Pamachius waters the holy ashes and venerated bones with the balm of alms, knowing that it is written: 'as water extinguishes fire so does alms, sin,' " He must, of course, refer to the Souls detained in Purgatory; for, in heaven there is no sin, and, out of hell, we know, there is no redemption.

Saint Epiphanius who lived in the last year of the fourth and the beginning of the fifth century relates that, when Arius denied prayers for the dead, this heresy was condemned by the whole Church and its author numbered among the heretics. The teaching of Saint Augustine, one of the most renowned and Illustrious Doctors and Fathers of the Church, regarding the existence of Purgatory is as clear as an Italian sky. History has preserved no more beautiful or touching episode than the parting interview said to have taken place between him and his sainted mother—Monica. When that pious and venerable matron was near her death—that time when the passions make little impression upon us and the truth alone, according to our light is on our lips, she summoned her distinguished son to her side and thus addressed him: “My son, bury this body wherever you please; give yourself no concern about it; but one thing I ask of you that you remember me at the altar of the Lord wherever you may be.” He buried her at Ostia, near the mouth of the river Tiber in Italy, whence her sacred relics were afterwards translated to Rome and placed in the church dedicated to her son. Saint Augustine never forgot the dying advice of his holy mother; for, he was accustomed to offer up the “price of our Redemption” for the eternal repose of her soul. He prays most beautifully for her in the Book of his

Confessions; and he beseeches God to inspire all who may read his book to remember at the altar both his mother Monica and his father Patricius.

While Saint Louis the Ninth, King of France, who undertook the seventh Crusade against the Turks for the deliverance of the Holy Sepulchre, was strengthening some strongholds still in the hands of the christians, he received the sad intelligence that his mother, the noble queen Blanche, was no longer in this world. Bursting into tears and casting himself at the foot of the altar in his chapel he exclaimed: "I thank Thee, O Lord, for having preserved to me so long the best of mothers. Truly there was nothing in this world that I loved with such tenderness. Thou takest her from me. It is Thy Almighty will. May Thy holy Name be forever blessed." This great king professed his belief in Purgatory and showed his deep affection for his mother by having the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass offered up in his presence every day to the end of his life for the eternal repose of her soul. Eighteen years after, in twelve hundred and seventy, when he, too, came to die, he said to his eldest son, Philip: "After my death, take care to have a great many masses and prayers said for me in all churches and religious communities of France, and give me a share in all the good works which you shall do."

Two things I desire of you said Saint Margaret to her confessor on her death bed: "The one is, that, so long as you live, you remember my poor soul in your masses and prayers. The other is that you assist my children and teach them to fear and love God."

And so I might continue to cite passages from the Fathers and instances from the lives of all God's servants, till I would weary you, in proof of the sentiment they entertained with regard to Purgatory; and yet, this dogma so clearly put forth by the most venerable men of ancient times, is rejected by those sects, separated from the fold of the Church, who prefer to follow the selfish lead of modern reformers, rather than embrace the affectionate teaching handed down to us from of old and hallowed by the veneration of antiquity, as well as of later ages. In the sixteenth century, when Luther, Calvin, and the so-called Reformers, rose up and blasphemed against the doctrines of the Catholic Church the celebrated Council of Trent, which was convened to defend the teaching of the Church against the innovators, clearly defined her faith with regard to Purgatory in the following terms: "If any one shall have said that to every sinner who repents, after having received the grace of Justification, sin is so remitted, and the guilt of eternal punishment blotted out that no guilt of temporal punishment may remain to be

paid, either in this world or the future Purgatory, before the approach to the kingdom of heaven can lay open to him, let him be anathema.”

We know, of course, that in the sacrament of Penance there are three essential parts: namely, Contrition, Confession and Satisfaction. Satisfaction in connection with the sacrament of Penance means or implies a fulfillment of whatever salutary penance the priest or confessor may impose; and, it necessarily includes something still more important, namely, that whatever injury may have been done to one's neighbor in person, property or character must be fully repaired, or, at least, to the full extent of the penitent's ability; stolen property must be restored to its rightful owner; injured character must be repaired; calumnies must be withdrawn, even at the cost of the calumniator's own reputation; all just debts must be paid, and all damage made good, otherwise there is no forgiveness here or hereafter.

Our Divine Lord, it is true, offered up an infinite satisfaction for all; but, in order that it may be applied to our own individual souls, we, in turn, must do our share, must show our appreciation of His infinite service by offering up our own penances and satisfactions. Hence, when through His infinite merits our sins have been pardoned and their eternal guilt has been washed away, there generally remains a temporal punishment to be

undergone either here or hereafter. That such is the case, is clearly and plainly put forth in many passages of Holy Writ. Adam and Eve sinned and their sin was pardoned and yet, alas, what terrible calamities befell them and us by way of temporal punishment. Moses the meekest of men and the favored friend of the Almighty, in punishment of a certain diffidence and weakness of faith to which he had given way when God commanded him to miraculously supply the people with water, was denied admission into the Land of Promise. And the Lord said to Moses and Aaron: "Because you have not believed me to sanctify me before the Children of Israel, you shall not bring these people into the land which I will give them." Numbers XX—II.

We read in the twelfth chapter of the Second Book of Kings that, when the devout King David, a man after God's own heart, had the misfortune to commit a grievous sin and had repented of it, the Almighty sent His prophet Nathan to upbraid him for his crime. "And David said to Nathan: I have sinned against the Lord. And Nathan said to David: The Lord also hath taken away thy sin; thou shalt not die. Nevertheless, because thou hast given occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme, for this thing, the child that is born to thee shall surely die." In like manner when the same royal personage committed a sin of

vain glory in numbering his people, the Lord by way of temporal punishment gave him his choice of three evils: war, famine or pestilence. David chose pestilence; and, there died of his people seventy thousand men. And yet, notwithstanding the Divine assurance that his sins were pardoned, the Sacred Text informs us that this penitent king ate ashes like bread and mingled his tears with his drink, ever remembering his former transgressions: "*Peccatum meum contra me est semper.*" "My sin is always before me."

Some times, however, it is true, the whole temporal punishment may be remitted along with the sin, as is the case in Baptism and Martyrdom which, when received with the proper dispositions, entirely remit both the sin and the punishment due to it. The same happens, though rarely, in vehement contrition and intense charity. But, seldom, alas! are sorrow and love so perfect, as to completely remit all the punishment due to sin; and, as this punishment is not always paid in the present life, partly through negligence, and partly because the penitent is frequently summoned hence before he has time to do penance for his sins, even after they have been forgiven, it follows, therefore, that this penance for sin, this temporal punishment due to it, must be borne in the other life where the soul is purged, before being admitted

into the eternal joys of heaven “into which nothing defiled shall enter.”

As to the particular place of punishment where the justice of God obliges Him thus to detain such souls, until their debts are fully discharged, or the kind and quality of the torments they suffer, or the manner in which they suffer, nothing has been defined by the Church. The opinion, however, commonly held by the Schoolmen is, that Purgatory is situated in the interior of the earth. They tell us, moreover, that there are within the earth four enclosures, or, rather, one enclosure, which is divided into four parts; and that all pains endured in the future life are reduced to two, the pain of loss, or the pain of having lost God, and the pain of sense, or the pain by which each of the senses is afflicted. Again, these pains are temporal or eternal. One enclosure now no longer occupied was set aside for the souls of the just who died before Christ. This is known as the Limbus of the Fathers—“*Limbus Patrum.*” In this limbus they felt the pain of loss, but this was only temporal, merely lasting for a time. A second Limbo is set aside for infants who die without Baptism. This is called the Limbus of Infants—“*Limbus Infantum.*” In it infants who die without Baptism suffer the pain of loss and this is eternal. A third enclosure in or under the earth, is that place where souls are purified and known to

us by the term Purgatory. There the souls that need purification before reaching heaven suffer the double pain of loss and sense, each of which is temporal or lasting only for a time. Finally, the last and deepest gulf or part is that reserved for the reprobate, that is, for the rebel angels and for all who depart this world in the terrible state of mortal sin. In this horrid gulf the reprobate suffer at the same time the pain of loss and the pain of sense, both of which are eternal.

Though nothing has been defined by the Church regarding the kind and quality of the sufferings endured in Purgatory, certain it is, that the pains surpass all that can be possibly imagined or described. Saint Augustine and other eminent Fathers and Doctors of the Church are of opinion that they suffer a real and material fire like that of hell; which being created merely for an instrument of Divine vengeance and blown up by the breath of an angry God has the special virtue of tormenting spirits with the most piercing activity and causes much more intense, more violent, more grievous pains than can be imagined or endured in this world. There is nothing in Revelation, it is true, to enlighten us with regard to the precise duration of the pains of Purgatory; but what we do know from this unquestionable source of truth is, that no soul that leaves this world defiled with the least stain, or charged with the smallest debt

to Divine Justice, can be admitted into that kingdom of perfect purity and unspotted sanctity till it be completely purged and cleansed. Nothing but what is decidedly chaste and spotless can stand before Him Who is infinite purity and sanctity and Who cannot bear the sight of the least iniquity. Whence it is said of heaven: "There shall in no wise enter into it anything defiled."—Apoc. XXI—27.

"Enter not into judgment with Thy servant," prays the prophet David, "for in Thy sight shall no man living be justified." Ps. CXLII—2. And does not the Prince of the Apostles assure us that the just man shall scarcely be saved?

"There is no doubt," says the learned Cardinal Bellarmine, "that the pains of Purgatory are not limited to ten or twenty years and that they last, in some instances, entire centuries. We know in general that they are measured by Divine Justice and that for each one they are proportioned to the number and gravity of the faults which he has not yet expiated.

So, then, Purgatory exists. It exists in reality for many who, perhaps, while on earth, were near and dear to us and who at this moment are being purged for faults which we regard as light and trivial, nay, perhaps, for faults which we ourselves occasioned. It exists, too, in all probability, for you and for me; for which of us would

presume to say that he has never yet sullied the bright robe of his Baptismal innocence, or that he has fully and perfectly satisfied Divine Justice for the transgressions that he has hitherto committed! Would, indeed, that it were thus! Surely, we cannot deny that Purgatory is a reality; and hence our fear of it is well grounded; I go even farther and I say that, it is very likely, yea almost certain that, most, if not all of us, will pass through that prison from which we shall not go out till we have paid the last farthing. "We must," writes the gentle Saint Francis de Sales, "die between two pillows; the one of the humble confession that we merit nothing but hell; the other, of an entire confidence that God in His infinite mercy will give us Paradise."

"Better is it," says the pious Author of the Imitation, "to purge away our sins, and cut off our vices now, than to leave them for purgation hereafter. There one hour of punishment will be more grievous than a hundred years of the most bitter penance here." Book I—c. XXIV.

"He who purifies himself from his faults in this present life," declares Saint Catherine of Genoa, "satisfies with a penny a debt of a thousand ducats; and he who waits till the other life to discharge his debts, consents to pay a thousand ducats for that which before he might have paid with a penny."

And yet, withal, the doctrine of Purgatory is not only deeply instructive, but likewise truly and eminently consoling. How beautifully Mother Church thus bridges over the dark chasm of the grave! How faithfully and tenderly she comes to our aid in the saddest of our griefs and sorrows, bidding us not "to mourn as those who have no hope," and assuring us that not even death can sever the bond that unites us.

How sweet and inviting the thought, to quote Chateaubriand, that the mortifications which we voluntarily impose upon ourselves, and the sacrifices and prayers which we offer in behalf of the Souls of the Faithful Departed, will receive their reward from the Almighty in the rescue of a father, a mother, a brother, or a sister, from the expiatory flame! What a charming feature of our religion to impel the heart of man to virtue by the power of love, and to make him feel that the very coin which gives bread for the moment to an indigent fellow being, entitles, perhaps, some rescued soul to an eternal position at the table of the Lord.

We have reason, indeed, to thank God for having called us to a religion whose charity and zeal extend beyond the narrow limits of this mortal life, and we should deem ourselves happy in being the children of a Church which, after closing our eyes in death, is solicitous to assist us in the

world beyond the grave. The concern of our separated brethren for their members, extends not beyond the narrow limits that enclose their mortal remains; but the Catholic Church, that plaintive dove and beloved spouse of Jesus Christ, ceases not to intermit her sighs and tears, until she has placed us in the bosom of eternal happiness.

And we, in turn, as children of so good a mother should never lose sight of the duty that we owe to our dead. It is a mistake to suppose that because years have elapsed since they left us, or because of the good and virtuous lives they led while with us, that they have long ago been admitted to the eternal joys of heaven. Still less should we imitate the example of those who, in their over exactitude for the last resting place of the departed, seldom or never breathe a prayer for the eternal repose of their souls. The flowers that we strew on the graves of our loved ones, and the stones that mark the last resting place of the dear departed, serve, it is true, to keep alive within us the memory of those that are gone; but these, remember, are only material and temporary testimonies of affection, unavailing to the silent sleeper beneath. The flowers will soon wither and die; and the monument that rises but a few feet over the grave, will some day crumble and fall on the dust that covers it. Prayer, on

the contrary, blooms forever in the heavenly garden of Paradise and ascends even unto the throne of Him Who holds in His hands the deliverance of the Holy Souls, and Who is ever ready and willing to hearken to the supplications which we address to Him for the peace and rest of the Souls of the Faithful Departed.

It is said in the thirty-fifth chapter of the Book of Genesis that when Rachel died Jacob erected a pillar over her sepulchre: "this is the pillar of Rachel's monument to this day." Many ages have passed away since then but the tradition of cherishing the memory of the dead has been consistent and universal. Christian Faith did not change it; but, with fuller knowledge, inspired more pressing motives and brought hope that made remembrance a consolation to the living and a blessing to the dead. In the catacombs, the inscriptions—sometimes the briefest sentence, or even a word or two, coarsely scratched on the wet mortar—show the care that, even in the stress of persecution, would not leave the Faithful Departed without a remembrance. Mortuary chapels, memorial windows, monuments in brass and marble, anniversary masses, dirges and perpetual foundations, all bear witness to the many ways by which "love, strong as death" strives to perpetuate the memory of the dead and gain prayers for their happy repose. Nowadays advantage is

taken of means that modern times have put within our reach. We write the names of relatives and very dear friends in our prayer-books; we circulate memorial cards in the hope that they will be preserved, and at times remind the living of their duty and charity towards the dead. All this is beautiful. It is Catholic Faith and hope and love manifesting itself in one supreme desire of prayer for those who have passed away. It is impossible, of course, for us always to remember, at the most fitting time, all for whom we have a wish, or for whom we have promised to pray. There are memories that no lapse of time can weaken; but there are many lying away in the outer circle of our charity that fade with the progress of our years. The cares of the world crowd into our lives, overlying and confusing one another, till dates are lost and even names are forgotten or only dimly and infrequently called to mind. But true charity embraceth and remembereth all. History tells of an ancient Athenian, the celebrated Cimon, that he had the grief to see his father imprisoned by heartless creditors whom he was unable to satisfy. What was worse, he could not raise a sum sufficient to effect his father's ransom, and the old man died in prison. Cimon hastened to the prison and requested that they would, at least, permit him to take the body of his father that he might give it

burial. This, too, was refused him under pretext that, not having wherewith to pay his debts, he could not be set at liberty. "Allow me, then, first to bury my father," cried Cimon, "and I will immediately return and take his place in prison." We admire this act of filial piety on the part of this pagan Athenian, but are we not also bound to imitate it? Have we not, perhaps, a father, a mother, or some dear one in the fiery prison of Purgatory, and, if so, are we not bound to deliver them, even at the cost of the greatest sacrifices? More fortunate than Cimon we have wherewith to pay their debts nor need we take their place. If, then, we have lost any dear friends in Christ, and who has not?—for

"What home so guarded that has no vacant chair,

What flock so well tended but one dead lamb is there?"—

Let us in our uncertainty as to whether they are yet with God, or still detained on the borderland of twilight and of longing, frequently and earnestly recommend them to the Divine clemency. Let no day pass over us in silence; no night, without a prayer for their peaceful and happy repose.

Eternal Punishment.

“In a flame of fire, giving vengeance to them who know not God, and who obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. Who shall suffer eternal punishment in destruction, from the face of the Lord, and from the glory of His power.”

2 Thessalonians—1-8-9.

ETERNAL PUNISHMENT.

The doctrine of Eternal Punishment is one that has, at all times, met with harsh and bitter opposition by those outside the pale of the Catholic Church. But, before men will ever be able, effectually and permanently, to destroy all belief in a future state of reprobation, they must erase from the Christian code, all belief in God, religion and morality. Voltaire and the wretched crew that sided with him in their warfare against Christianity, perverted their splendid abilities to fling away the fetters and restraints of religion and the Divine Law. Ingersoll and his unholy brood, the adherents of Socialism, Pantheism, Communism, Nihilism, Agnosticism, and all the other "isms" that Free Thought and Infidelity have engendered are laboring hard, are sparing no pains, shrinking from no sacrifice, of honor and truth, to carry out their diabolical purposes. All these, it is true, gain a foothold over a few, and secure a following: for, nowadays, as ever, some doubt the doctrine, others half believe it, and more ridicule and discard it altogether. All this, how-

ever, does not signify that hell no longer exists. Man can not argue away a hell without, likewise, destroying all hope of heaven; for the ultimate faith that we have in heaven is drawn from the same source from which emanates the fear of hell. If there is no hell, there can be no heaven. The profoundest hope, or the highest authority we have for either, is founded upon God's unfailing word. Seeking light and information from this divine source we discover to our amazement, that wherever heaven is described as promised hell is also taught and seen. Rewards for the righteous and punishments for the wicked go hand in hand throughout the Bible story.

Dante drew his conception of hell from our Blessed Savior's portrayal, and neither his poems nor Dore's pictures depict Gehenna as vividly as do the words of Christ. If there is no place in the realms of death where virtue shall face its destroyer, and where justice shall be meted to the ungodly, then life becomes a tragedy more dark, more terrible, and more inexplicable than death can ever be. If there is no hell in the world to come and no judgment throne, shall we then conclude that the murderers, thieves in high places, oppressors of the poor, libertines, unjust judges, absconding bankers, drunkards, grafters and bare-faced robbers, forever go unpunished for their crimes? God forbid.

If the trend of modern thought and voluptuous living shrinks from the belief of an abode of lost and ruined souls, hard against its futile reasoning stands the firm, cold judgment of Christ, the Son of the Living God, and the teachings of His everlasting Church which will merit the faith as well as the approbation of all true believers till the consummation of time. It will be my aim, then, to prove to you, in the first place, that hell exists; and afterwards to give you some idea of its torments and duration.

In spite of the doubts and the denials of atheism and infidelity we are assured on the authority of Divine Revelation that there is, somewhere, in God's creation a state of existence where the rebel angels and those who miss the purpose of their creation are eternally banished from the light of God's countenance and are in frightful torments—a land according to Holy Job “perpetually clouded with mists and darkness, where no order but everlasting horror inhabits;” where there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.

This state of existence is called by us, hell. No doctrine of our Holy Faith is more clearly set forth in Sacred Scripture than the doctrine of an endless state of punishment reserved for the wicked angels and those who die at enmity with their Creator; and we prove this truth, first and

particularly, from those passages of the Divine Word in which the torments of the reprobate are directly called eternal.

In the description which the Evangelist St. Matthew gives us of the last judgment, the Savior addresses the reprobate in these words: "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire which was prepared for the devil and his angels," and he concludes thus: "These shall go into everlasting punishment, but the just into life everlasting." Elsewhere in his gospel he tells us "that it is better to enter into life maimed and lame, than having two hands and two feet to be cast into everlasting fire." (Matt. XVIII, 8.)

St. Paul in his Epistle to the Thessalonians assures us that, "They who know no God and obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, shall suffer eternal pains in destruction from the face of the Lord, and the glory of His power." (II. Thes. I, 9.)

The Sacred Scriptures likewise demonstrate the existence of hell from various other passages in which the state of the souls detained there is described as immutable. Hence it is said that the anger of God rests upon them; that they shall never attain the kingdom of heaven, and that they shall never obtain remission, but shall be guilty of an everlasting sin.

The testimonies of the Fathers and the Doctors of the Church, the anathemas pronounced in councils against those asserting the contrary, and the unanimous tradition of nations are all arguments in favor of this great truth of faith. Nay, more, the records of ancient peoples, both Christian and Barbarians, show traces of a belief in a future state of reprobation. Even the Romans of old had their Tartarus where the Furies tormented their wretched victims, and where the wicked suffered according to their crimes. The fact, too, that Almighty God Himself has been pleased to reveal it to us and that men of the greatest genius have at all times professed their belief therein is testimony sufficient that the doctrine contains in itself nothing inconsistent with the divine attributes, nor contrary to right reason. Almighty God, infinitely good as He is, wishes, of course, the salvation of all men and gives to every human being the means necessary and sufficient to attain the end of his creation. Now, it is but in accordance with reason and the divine attributes that a creature endowed with intellect and free will should, by co-operating with the grace of God and observing His holy laws, attain the purpose of its existence; or, by resisting these means, lose it. We know, moreover, on the authority of Divine Revelation, that the present life is a time of merit or demerit, and reason itself assures us

that this time can not be indefinitely prolonged, otherwise the soul constantly struggling would never attain the crown, always in exile, would never arrive at its true country. It must needs be, therefore, that after the "status viae," the journey or the way, there should follow the "status termini," the end, in which a rational creature if it has struggled courageously during the journey should attain the reward of its labors and rest in the possession of everlasting good.

Reason assures us, moreover, that the time of our probation extends not beyond the limits of this present life. The mutual conjunction of body and soul constitutes, as we know, human nature. The soul is created to animate the body, and the body exists as the companion of the soul in its operations. Hence, if the time of our probation is restricted to the present life when the soul and body are united, we must conclude that the future holds out for us rewards or punishments according to our merits, and that, if our probationary term expires with the present life, the state of the soul is fixed and unchangeable at death. Consequently, he who dies at enmity with his Maker, remains eternally separated from Him, is deprived forever of the sovereign good in the possession and enjoyment of which consists eternal happiness. Furthermore, as sin which is the death of the soul can be removed only by God

and justice lost restored at His good pleasure, and since God's grace is given us only in this life, it follows that, if sin is not remitted here it remains forever, and consequently that damnation is eternal. It is true that the Church has never issued a definite decree on the nature of the punishment of hell; but it is clearly shown from the general teachings of the theologians that the pain of hell will be the pain of loss, and the pain of sense, and that each will be eternal. To be convinced of this it seems only necessary that one should read the numerous passages of the Scriptures bearing on this subject. Future punishment is in truth a necessary concomitant of the moral government of God, Who, we know, has made us free moral agents. We are at liberty to do or not to do, and we know that there is within us a monitor which tells us that we should do certain things and avoid others. We know, moreover, by experience, that the going counter to the promptings of this monitor involves remorse and suffering, sometimes of the intensest sort. It is a fearful thought that God has so constituted us that the violation of the laws of nature brings its own punishment. Hell, then, is not so much the arbitrary, direct infliction of Divine Justice, as it is the necessary consequence of our own actions. As heaven is nothing more or less than the Creator and the creature, God and the soul, eternally,

united in their true relations, so hell is nothing more, essentially, than God and the soul eternally separated.

God has created all things in "order weight and measure." He has established everything according to a definite plan and proportion, and all things stand in a certain, well-defined relation to each other, as well as to Himself. So long as these relations are duly preserved, peace and happiness ensue: when they are disturbed, peace and happiness give place to pain and anguish. The greater the disturbance, the greater and the more acute, of course, will be the pain; till, finally, the climax is reached when the disturbance comes to affect and interfere with that highest of all relations of which a rational creature is capable; the relation between himself and God.

Whence comes pain in the body? From some departure from the harmony pre-established by the author of nature. A dislocated bone is one which is out of place, and moves not in its proper socket. It is a thing out of order. Pain ensues. A nerve becomes exposed; a fierce throbbing agony is the almost immediate consequence. That is nature's cry for the restoration of order. A grain of sand, a wandering mote, or some particle of foreign matter becomes lodged between the eye and its lid and again nature suffers, and that because order is outraged. This law is inexorable.

Every departure from the harmony established by the God of nature is visited with its proportionate punishment. Violate a law of nature, and nature will punish the offender. A little child is taught to balance itself and to walk upright by the pain it suffers in its repeated falls; so also will it resist the attraction of the bright, dancing flames, and learn in course of time, to keep a respectful distance from the fire, but not till after it has once or twice burnt its fingers. So, again, excess in eating is punished in inconvenience and interior aches, and the experience of such after effects causes the greedy man to put a bridle on his appetite.

From the many passages in the New Testament that give us a distinct knowledge of hell and its character, as well as from many more in the Old Testament, pertaining more or less directly to the subject, it should be evident to all that the Catholic Church has accepted the doctrine of eternal punishment like all the other articles of faith, from Divine Revelation. Granted, then, that hell most undoubtedly exists, and that the torments endured there are eternal, let us see what hell is in itself, and in what these torments consist.

Theologians, resting their authority on reason and revelation, tell us that the pains of hell are of two kinds, namely, the pain of loss and the pain of sense. The pain of loss which consti-

tutes the very essence of hell, consists in the eternal deprivation of the Beatific Vision, and of those indescribable and unending joys reserved in the hereafter for those who love and serve their Maker. Yes, the agony of an intense and hopeless longing after God whom we know to be the source of all possible joy and happiness, and whom we have forever lost through our own fault, constitutes hell. Here on earth we see and admire God only as He is reflected in the mirror of creation. We behold His omnipotence in the storm and in the tempest, His beauty in the admirable framework of creation; His bounty and goodness in the graces and the blessings we enjoy; but Himself we see not; and consequently we know not now what it is to lose Him. On judgment day, however, we shall behold His Divine Beauty, not indeed in the Beatific Vision, but under the transparent veil of the glorified humanity of the Incarnate Son of God: and beholding this, we shall yearn after God with a nameless yearning, and the knowledge of what we have lost through our own fault will fill us with intolerable confusion and anguish. This will be the worm that dieth not, far worse than the fire which shall never be extinguished. If, then, the possession and the enjoyment of God in the Beatific Vision is so great a good, and eternal separation from the light of His countenance so great an evil, what kind of

a life must it be that is lived in hell? The life of hell is a life in which all kinds of bodily agonies are endured, and that, too, to the very highest degree. Think of the countless painful diseases to which men may be subjected; of the numberless ills to which flesh is heir, some of which kill with sheer pain in a few moments. Every limb, every deeply hidden nerve, every cell which life informs, has a cluster of torments peculiar to itself. Reflect upon what the head, the teeth, the ears, the eyes alone can suffer. Consider, moreover, all the variety of wounds that may be inflicted upon our wincing flesh and our tingling nerves, whether upon a field of battle, or in a surgical operation. All the exquisite ingenuity of all the tortures that were heaped upon all the martyrs in the days of persecution: all these and an excess of new and undreamed of tortures of our flesh, all these, always and at the highest degree, always up to the pains of the intolerable and beyond it, such is the life of hell.

This is something terrible, but to it we must add the mental agonies that are there endured. Envy, spite, rage, gloom, sadness, vexation, grief, dejection, all these are there, in all their kinds and in unspeakable intensity. In hell every vice will have its own peculiar torments. There the proud will be filled with all confusion, and the avaricious pinched with the most miserable want.

There the slothful will be pricked with burning goads: the gluttonous and intemperate tormented with extreme hunger and thirst and the luxurious and the lovers of pleasure will have burning pitch and fetid sulphur rained upon them; while the envious, like rabid dogs, will howl with grief.

The life of hell is a life from which there is a total absence of sympathy and love. This is a very easy thing to say, but it is not as easy to penetrate into its significance. The mind loses itself when it endeavors to traverse an interminable desert eternity where no flowers of love, nor even their similitude can grow. Shall a sympathetic voice never speak to us more? Shall a kindly eye never look at us again? Shall even the hearts of the fathers and the mothers and the dear ones now basking in the noonday brightness of God's unfailing beauty, and who loved us with such unutterable tenderness now beat the more happily because the justice of God is done upon us forlorn, impenitent offenders? Who can live without love? I know not. Love more than any other passion has controlled the destinies of the world. It has been, historically, the greatest natural motive power upon earth; nay, whence comes the natural brightness which the life of every man, woman, and child here present to-day possesses if not from love? What should we be at this very moment if we had none to love? We all

crave for it. Our whole nature expands under its influence. It converts the deepest misery into happiness and makes heroes out of cowards.

"In peace love tunes the shepherds reed
In war he mounts the warriors steed,
In halls in gay attire is seen
In hamlets dances on the green
Love rules the court, the camp, the grove,
And men below, and saints above,
For love is heaven, and heaven is love. (Scott).

But in hell it is not so, and there we know that the lost must live without it. More than this, hatred will be all around them. Every lost soul, every lost demon will hate them, hate them individually and with a concentration of rage and hatred that it is even terrible to think of. There is something insupportable in being hated; something maddening. Even when we are hated unjustly, and by only one man, and with love all around us, coming in from every point of the compass, see how we run to God and cling to Him that He may make up for us what is wanting and take our part against our unjust brother. But, in hell we shall be inundated with scorn and rage and we shall one while cower in our shame as knowing how richly a confirmed enemy of God merits far more than this; and another while we shall rage with equal scorn and hatred against

every one else, even while we ourselves are being crushed by the utter impatience of an unutterable fury.

The life of hell is also a life of terror. Fear is, perhaps, one of the greatest tortures to which human nature can be submitted. Have you not at some time or other experienced the dread which the visible approach of some great evil; the agony of an uncertain evil, or the distracted fright of a present evil caused you? Yet, ordinarily, life is not greatly tortured by fear. It is for the most part but an occasional visitant, and an extremely transient one at that. Indeed, life would be hardly bearable if it were otherwise. But the whole life of hell is a life of fear, and fear such as is unheard of upon earth. One feature of hell will enable us to bring this home to ourselves. We shall be in the hands of devils whose office it shall be to rack, distress, and torture us with a vindictive cruelty of which we can form no conception. Think of being confined for a night only with an unchained, frenzied maniac in a cell, to be locked in, bound hand and foot amidst a crowd of savages, all free to torment us as they would, what light and easy endurances even these would be compared with those wild panics of rage and terror in hell, a terror which can neither escape, nor hide itself, nor die. The life of hell is a life without pauses, dimunitions, or vicissitudes. No

Angel ever wings his way thither on an errand of consolation. All the combined eloquence of that fiery abode could not bring even one single drop of water from earth's thousand fountains to cool the torture for one lightnings flash of time. "Father Abraham," cried the rich man, "have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water to cool my tongue, for I am tormented in this flame." What was the answer? "Son, remember that thou didst receive good things in thy lifetime, and likewise, Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted and thou art tormented."

Finally, the life of hell is a life of blank and absolute despair. As it is difficult for us to conceive a life without love, it is, perhaps, not less so to fancy what it is not to hope. We can not put into form and figure in our own minds the unimaginable blackness of a soul from which all expectation, all prospect, all future has fled. Here on earth we are always looking forward to something. We count for days; for weeks; for months, upon some proffered pleasure, to find, when it is past and gone, that half the enjoyment was in the anticipation thereof. In heaven we know that all will be continuous and unwearied; new joys will be ever gushing forth, gladsome and afresh, from the soul, accompanied with such magnificent expansions both of interest and of heart

as are beyond the boldest and the wildest of our present dreams. But in hell the only vicissitude is the misery of an impatience that has no hope; the only future is the everlastingness of its intolerable present.

Holy Scripture tells us that hell is a place of eternal torments, of everlasting fire, where the worm never dies, and where the fire is never extinguished; a land of darkness and distress where misery dwells forever; a pit of fire where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth; a horrid prison where there will be no release; a pit of flames and brimstone, into which all those are cast who, during life, gave themselves over to sinful pleasure; a boundless ocean of fire kindled by the wrath of an angry God into which the damned shall be hurled forever. Here on earth the bare mention of the word fire, in many cases, carries with it a dreadful thought. If a live spark fall on our clothing, it is madness we think to play with it. When we read or hear others narrate how the enemies of Christ poured hot melted lead down the throats of the early Christians, and even besmeared their bodies with seething pitch to light up the Roman amphitheatres by night, our sensibilities are touched to the quick. Yet, all these torments had an end. Death came and brought relief to the martyrs and then their souls were conducted to heaven; but the fire of hell, con-

stantly fanned by the anger of the Almighty, is endless. It is a fire, says St. Augustine, which measures the wickedness of the sinner; a fire whose intensity and quantity grow in proportion to the number and enormity of his sins; a fire which instead of consuming its victim, keeps it alive. "Every one of the lost souls," says Holy Writ, "shall be salted with fire." (St. Mark, IX—48.) As the packer so covers his meat so that it penetrates every fibre, and preserves it from decay, so shall the fires of hell penetrate the bodies and the souls of the damned, even to the very marrow of their bones, and thus preserve alive for all eternity those unfortunate victims of divine justice. What a frightful sentence to fall from the lips of a merciful Jesus. "Every one shall be salted with fire."

"It is a fearful thing," says St. Paul, in his Epistle to the Hebrews (X, 31), "to fall into the hands of the living God." And, as no eye hath seen, nor ear heard, and as it hath not entered into the heart of man to conceive, the great happiness of the blessed in heaven; so, also, no eye hath seen, nor ear heard, nor hath it entered into the mind of man to conceive, the dreadful torments in hell awaiting those who, when on earth, were given over to vice, and then die without being reconciled to the God whom they had offended. It is said in the book of Eccl., "If the tree fall

to the south or to the north, in whatsoever place it shall fall, there shall it be.' The tree here spoken of is the human soul. At the moment of its separation from the body it falls either to the north or to the south, that is, it goes either to heaven or to hell. And, just as Almighty God allows the dead tree to remain where it has fallen, so does He also permit the soul to lie forever in that bed which in life it had prepared for itself. To say that the human language can not express the anguish of eternal perdition is putting it very mildly. We can not in our present state of existence, even imagine what it really is. We might talk all day to a man, blind from his birth, about the beauties of a landscape and descant upon the pleasing effects produced on us by light and shade, diversity of color, and the like, but it would be simply impossible for him to gain from any description that might be given to him of nature, such ideas as we get by the use of our eyes. Could the reprobate even for one single instant cherish the hope that after the long lapse of lingering ages, the Creator might compassionate their misery and mitigate the intensity and duration of their sufferings, I fancy that hell would soon become a sort of paradise. But, no, the disconsolate and forlorn hope that they might have been saved will be indelibly engraven in fiery characters upon the walls of hell, and the parting male-

diction of the Savior, "depart from me ye cursed into everlasting fire which was prepared for the devil and his angels," will forever re-echo through the dismal abodes of that bottomless pit from which "neither plummet nor rope shall ever draw the silver sand of hope."

Many comparisons have been employed to convey to us an idea of the eternity of hell's torments. The following appears to me to be the most startling. I will suppose for the moment that I have lost my soul and that I am buried deep down in the deepest vaults of hell. Once in every thousand years—think what a long, long period that is—an angel leaves his home in heaven, and winging his noiseless flight to my abode of misery and pain, carries away in a little golden thimble one briny tear. He goes back to his home, and after the long and wearisome lapse of another thousand years, returns again, and he continues to repeat his milennial visits with uninterrupted fidelity. At the end of his sixth visit his tiny vessel is full and I have been in hell six thousand years—a period which the geologists tell us the world has been in existence. Now, when he shall have collected tears enough to flood the universe, not this earth alone, mind you, which is but an ant hill in God's creation, but all the countless worlds that roll in space, my eternity, will be no nearer to its end than when the angel carried away in

his little golden thimble that very first briny tear.

To the consideration of such a thought we cry out with St. Augustine, "Lord, here burn, here cut, but spare me for eternity." Yes, when years will have passed into ages, when ages will have passed into myriads and myriads of ages, when the mind of man will have exhausted itself in endeavoring to measure the breadth of eternity by its own ideas of time; yea, when time itself will have ceased, and worlds will have passed away, hell will ever be at its beginning to continue through the ages that are to be forever and forever.

Think you that they are many that are lost? Oh, yes. It is a truth implied in our Blessed Lord's own divine words, "Many are called, but few are chosen." Strive to enter by the narrow gate, for many I say to you shall seek to enter and shall not be able. Wide is the gate and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there are who go in thereat. How narrow is the gate and straight is the way that leadeth to life, and how few there are that find it." These are the utterances of One who has declared that though heaven and earth shall pass away His word shall remain forever. The Lord, as the Prophet Ezechiel assures us (XXXIII., II), does not desire the death of any sinner, but that he be converted and live. He is not willing, says St.

Peter, that any should perish (2 Peter, III. 9) and the great Apostle St. Paul declares that it is God's will that all men be saved and that they come to the knowledge of the truth (Tim. I. Eph. IV). He invites all men, without exception, to the inheritance of His heavenly kingdom, and supplies them with the means necessary and sufficient to attain the happy end of their creation. Nevertheless, it is not to be doubted but that the greater part of mankind is lost forever, since the unfailing words of Christ Himself declare it to be so. "Many are called, but few are chosen." Why God has made us free agents and put our happiness or misery on our own hands we can not tell. He has not revealed the reason to us. The fact we know by experience and aside from the testimony of revelation, we have every reason to suppose that our condition in another world will depend upon our character and conduct in this. We shall carry our character with us. "As the tree falleth so shall it lie." If we are lost it will be our own fault, and the most poignant part of all our grief will be the reflection that it might have been otherwise.

"Of all sad words of tongue or pen,
The saddest are these: It might have been."

Objection is some times made to endless punishment on the grounds of the goodness and the mercy of God. But nothing could be more futile.

Its absurdity is proven from the fact that we not only suffer in this world in consequence of our bad actions, but we suffer, apparently, in a manner greatly disproportioned to the fault committed. How often, for example, does a man by some youthful indiscretion, lay the foundation for a lifetime of wearisome, intense suffering. God permits this. There are hells in this world, and if we are allowed to make beds of fire for ourselves on which we are compelled to lie for a lifetime, without impugning the goodness and the mercy of God, who will dare to say that we may not prepare for ourselves beds of fire in eternity, without impugning that same goodness and mercy. More than this. Theologians and spiritual writers do not hesitate to compare the many that are lost to the flakes of snow and the drops of water that fall from the heavens on a winter's day, or to the countless sands that pave the seashore. On the other hand, they draw similes from the Scriptures and compare the number of those who are chosen and saved to the few ears of corn that are picked up by the gleaner during the harvest, and to the few grapes which escape the workman's eye in the vintage.

They tell us, moreover, that of all the descendants of Adam, from the creation down to the very end of time, by far the greater number is lost. Of Christians they say that, if we exclude bap-

tized infants, who die in the days of their purity and innocence, only a minority is saved. When the calculation is confined to adult Catholics alone, opinion is divided. But, even then, the number of those who take a rigorous view of the matter, or who incline to the belief that more are lost than are saved, is far in excess of those who hold the contrary opinion.

All this is terrifying, to be sure, and is enough not only to alarm sinners, but also to fill the just with a salutary fear. Think you that you and I will be saved? God grant that it may be so. Would it not be woful in the extreme, if any one here present should be lost? You who have so many and great opportunities: you who were born and baptized in the bosom of the one, true, and saving faith: you who are nourished with great sacraments and who are the centre of a very world of invisible graces and blessings! And, oh, woful beyond measure would it not be, and what excuse could I plead, if I should be lost; I a priest of the Living God, exercising daily functions that angels would gladly perform; I who am daily fed with the bread of life and the wine that generates virgins: I who have been so long familiar with the eternal truths; I who am permitted to live so close to the Holy of Holies, and to handle all the sacred vessels of the sanctuary; and who have a profusion of lights and graces not granted to those

less divinely favored: what plea, I repeat, can I offer, if I should happen to be lost? And, yet, to all of us, hell is an imminent possibility. Even at best, with the bravest efforts, it is not at all certain that any one of us shall escape it. The saints tell us that those who are the surest of not going there, are the likeliest to be mistaken. No man knoweth, says the Scripture, whether he be worthy of love or hatred. Work out your salvation in fear and trembling is the injunction of the Savior. You remember the parable of the rich man and Lazarus. When the drop of water for which the rich man, buried in the abyss of hell, so despairingly prayed that Lazarus might be permitted to bring him, was denied him, he made the second but equally fruitless request: "Then father, I beseech thee, that thou wouldst send him to my father's house, for I have five brothers, that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torments." And Abraham said to him: "They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them." But he said: "No, father Abraham; but if one went to them from the dead they will do penance." But he said to him: "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they believe if one rise again from the dead."

It is not unlikely, but that at times it may have crossed your minds, also, that, if in some vision of the night some visitor from the land of spirits; a

father, a mother, a brother, or a sister, long since dead, were permitted to return and disclose to us some of the secrets of the unseen world, we would be better than we are. No, we would not be. The dead do not come back to us. The means and the advantages which they had once, we have now; and the same which we have now, they had once. We have God's indefectible church, and her divinely appointed ministers; we have her sacraments and her sacrifice; you have good examples, good books and prayer and if you neglect, abuse and despise these great means of salvation, your wail, when the temporal shall have given place to the eternal, will be the unavailing wail of the lost ones in that bottomless pit where "their worm dieth not and the fire is never extinguished."*

But who of all the countless dead have avoided hell? Those, and those only, who on earth took up their cross, and took it up daily, and so, and only so, and always so, have followed Christ. I have placed before you on this terrifying subject but thin shadows of their lesser realities; and, I earnestly hope and trust and pray that these thin shadows may lead us on, until hell, its existence, and torments may penetrate deep into our hearts and take their right place in our daily lives, and cause us so to live that we may escape hell, and merit to live with God forever and forever in the enjoyment of the Beatific Vision.

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